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M. K. GANDHI

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Though Gandhiji launched out only recently on a new type of education for India, he had for long very decided and revolutionary opinions regarding education. As he himself tells us, he sought years ago to put his ideas into effect in the education he gave to the children on the Tolstoy Farm which he established in South Africa. Since then he followed the same pattern of education wherever in India he had his colony of workers and children. The New Education (Nai Talim) which he advocated widely in 1937 in India was therefore nothing new to him, but something he had tested for full thirty years in actual practice in small groups and found worthwhile.

The purely literary education, with English as the medium of instruction, which the British introduced in India, was calculated to provide clerks for the Government, but not to stimulate initiative or skill in production. Gandhiji saw that such education not only isolated the educated from the people, but, what was worse, made their education of no practical use whatsoever to the people. With the destruction by the British of the ancient village organization and the dumping on the village of goods manufactured abroad, the people of the village were disorganized, lost their occupations, felt helpless and paralyzed, and were sinking steadily into poverty, unemployment and despair. The educated looked upon their education as a mere means to their own advancement even at the cost of the poor. Gandhiji saw that the only way of saving the nation at that juncture was to revive village economic life and to relate education to it. Education accordingly, he held, was to be based on village occupations. The child was to be trained to be a producer. And yet Gandhiji was too much interested in the child for his own sake to be guilty of making him but an efficient tool for economic ends. Consequently, though education

was to be based on a craft, Gandhiji insisted that the child's intellect and heart were to be trained as much as his hands. Instead of education being, as hitherto, academic, in a foreign tongue and unconnected with life, it was to be purposive, in the child's mother-tongue and organically connected with, nay more, centred round the child's social and cultural environment.

Though in this way Gandhiji hoped by education to revive our economic and cultural life, which was on the verge of collapse, there was still another factor which led him to advocate education through the medium of a handicraft. He was convinced that machine civilization, as fully evidenced in the world today, brought enslavement and exploitation of vast sections of a nation and of industrially backward peoples. Far from leading to freedom and self-dependence, it drove the worker or the subject race into complete subjection and dependence on a few who were in charge of industry or the State. Nay more, it caused incessant rivalries between nations, world wars and mutual destruction. He therefore felt that the only hope for the masses of our country was to avoid large-scale factory manufacture and to base our economic life on small-scale village production. This alone, he was certain, would lead to peace, freedom and development of the capacities and resourcefulness of the worker. For him the freedom and development of the individual, however weak or humble, was more important than a mere multiplication of goods through machines. He therefore looked forward to a day when village life based on handicrafts and agriculture would be revived, and people would work for each other for the good of all in the village, in neighbourliness and peace. An education which was to prepare children for such a future must of course be based on a handicraft. His entire scheme of education is thus rooted in non-violence and love of freedom for the lowest and the lost.

The modern world speaks glibly of freedom, democracy and peace, and seems hardly to realize that these

cannot be had unless the foundations for them are well and truly laid in the economic order. Gandhiji saw, as no one else did, that as we sow in the economic realm so do we reap. If our economic organization is such that its aim is production of an abundance of goods, that is all we shall have, not freedom or peace. If, on the other hand, it is freedom and peace we seek, then our entire economic, political and social organization as well as our educational system have to be directed towards realizing them, even if it means less in the way of material goods. Gandhiji's plan for education has the merit of having the one aim of achieving peace and freedom, for which all mankind yearns today.

These two, viz. (1) the unpractical nature of the education introduced by the British in India and (2) the non-violent order which Gandhiji wished to see established in our country constitute the background of his scheme of New or Basic Education, as he later called it.

Nevertheless, even apart from this background, his scheme is worthy of consideration for the educational theory on which it is based. This theory is

✓(a) that true education of the individual, which is all-round development of his faculties, is best obtained through action. If, biologically, thinking develops in man only as an aid to action, as evolutionary psychologists tell us, then Gandhiji's scheme of education bases itself on the sound and indisputable fact that knowledge and understanding develop in relation to problems set by action. Information thrust on the mind apart from action is most often only a burden on the memory and causes intellectual indigestion if nature does not come to the rescue and cast such learning into oblivion ;

(b) further, this education, if it is to draw out to the full the latent capacities of the child, has to be through a craft. For it is a craft, which is capable of being manipulated by the child that sets problems to him and calls out in relation to them his thought, character and artistic

sense. Under literary education, on the other hand, whatever training is given to the child is given in isolated sections. The mind is sought to be trained in the class apart from manual work, the hand and eyes in manual work apart from mind, and the heart in art and religion apart from the mind and action. But since the child is an organic unit, it is obvious that it is only such training as draws on all the faculties in a correlated manner, that can best develop a harmonious and well-balanced personality. In this age of over-specialization and compartmentalism, this plea of Gandhiji's for integration in the education of the child is timely and most valuable.

Unfortunately, Gandhiji did not have time to develop his views in any systematic manner. Nor did he believe in elaborating nice-sounding theories. Whatever conclusion he arrived at he put into action and regarded action as the only adequate test of the soundness of his views.

An attempt has been made in this volume to arrange his writings and speeches under topics for the convenience of the reader, and as far as possible in chronological order. Part V entitled " Criticisms and Clarifications " is of special interest and importance as in it Gandhiji expounds his theory in the face of doubts and difficulties.

Bombay, October 1, 1950

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

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NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH THEIR MEANINGS

Charkha Sangh—Spinners' Association

Daridranarayana—God in the form of the poor

Gur—jaggery

Kamadhuk, Kamadhenu—the cow of plenty, supposed to fulfil all desires

Khadi—hand-spun, hand-woven cloth

Kisan—a peasant

Khadi Yatra—a pilgrimage for the propagation of *khadi*

Lakh, Lac—the number 1,00,000

Nagari—a script in which Sanskrit is written

Nai Talim—literally, new education i.e. basic education

Pandal—covered enclosure in the open air for meetings

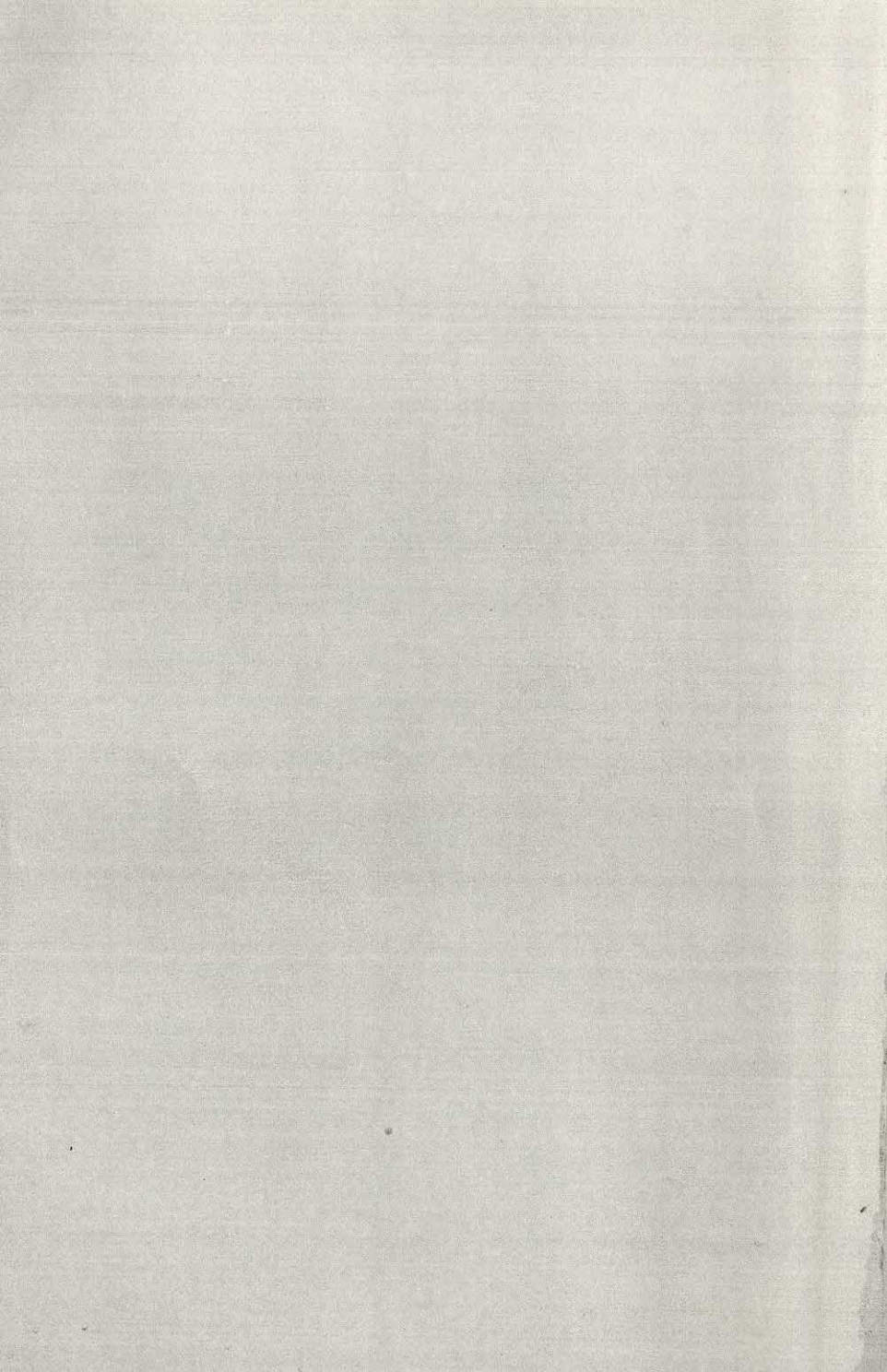
Shabnam—dew; extra-fine muslin

Takli—a simple contrivance for spinning

Talimi Sangh—Basic Education Association

Varna—a class; a caste

BASIC EDUCATION



SECTION ONE: THE NEW EDUCATION

1

NEED FOR NEW EDUCATION

Editor: The ordinary meaning of education is a knowledge of letters. To teach boys reading, writing and arithmetic is called primary education. A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such an education. Carried away by the flood of western thought we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people.

Now let us take higher education. I have learned geography, astronomy, algebra, geometry, etc. What of that? In what way have I benefited myself or those around me? Why have I learned these things? Professor Huxley has thus defined education:

"That man I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working orderwhose mind is stored with a knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature.....whose passions are trained to come to heel by vigorous will, the servant of a tender consciencewho has learnt to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself. Such a one and no other, I conceive, has had

a liberal education, for he is in harmony with nature. He will make the best of her and she of him."

If this is true education, I must emphatically say that the sciences I have enumerated above I have never been able to use for controlling my senses. Therefore, whether you take elementary education or higher education, it is not required for the main thing. It does not make men of us. It does not enable us to do our duty.

Reader : If that is so, I shall have to ask you another question. What enables you to tell all these things to me ? If you had not received higher education, how would you have been able to explain to me the things that you have ?

Editor : You have spoken well. But my answer is simple : I do not for one moment believe that my life would have been wasted, had I not received higher or lower education. Nor do I consider that I necessarily serve because I speak. But I do desire to serve and in endeavouring to fulfil that desire, I make use of the education I have received. And, if I am making good use of it, even then it is not for the millions, but I can use it only for such as you, and this supports my contention. Both you and I have come under the bane of what is mainly false education. I claim to have become free from its ill effect, and I am trying to give you the benefit of my experience and in doing so, I am demonstrating the rottenness of this education.

Moreover, I have not run down a knowledge of letters in all circumstances. All I have now shown is that we must not make of it a fetish. It is not our Kamadhuk. In its place it can be of use and it has its place when we have brought our senses under subjection and put our ethics on a firm foundation. And then, if we feel inclined to receive that education, we may make good use of it. As an ornament it is likely to sit well on us. It now follows that it is not necessary to make this education compulsory. Our ancient school system is enough. Character-building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.

Reader : Do I then understand that you do not consider English education necessary for obtaining Home Rule ?

Editor : My answer is yes and no. To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result. Is it not a sad commentary that we should have to speak of Home Rule in a foreign tongue ?

And it is worthy of note that the systems which the Europeans have discarded are the systems in vogue among us. Their learned men continually make changes. We ignorantly adhere to their cast-off systems. They are trying, each division, to improve its own status. Wales is a small portion of England. Great efforts are being made to revive a knowledge of Welsh among Welshmen. The English Chancellor, Mr Lloyd George is taking a leading part in the movement to make Welsh children speak Welsh. And what is our condition ? We write to each other in faulty English, and from this even our M.A.s are not free ; our best thoughts are expressed in English ; the proceedings of our Congress are conducted in English ; our best newspapers are printed in English. If this state of things continues for a long time, posterity will — it is my firm opinion — condemn and curse us.

It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc. have increased ; English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into people. Now, if we are doing anything for the people at all, we are paying only a portion of the debt due to them.

Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium, that when I become a barrister, I may not speak my mother-tongue and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language ? Is not this absolutely absurd ? Is it not a sign of slavery ? Am I to blame the English for it or myself ? It is we, the English-

knowing Indians, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us.

I have told you that my answer to your last question is both yes and no. I have explained to you why it is yes. I shall now explain why it is no.

We are so much beset by the disease of civilization, that we cannot altogether do without English education. Those who have already received it may make good use of it wherever necessary. In our dealings with the English people, in our dealings with our own people, when we can only correspond with them through that language, and for the purpose of knowing how disgusted they (the English) have themselves become with their civilization, we may use or learn English, as the case may be. Those who have studied English will have to teach morality to their progeny through their mother-tongue and to teach them another Indian language ; but when they have grown up, they may learn English, the ultimate aim being that we should not need it. The object of making money thereby should be eschewed. Even in learning English to such a limited extent we shall have to consider what we should learn through it and what we should not. It will be necessary to know what sciences we should learn. A little thought should show you that immediately we cease to care for English degrees, the rulers will prick up their ears.

Reader : Then what education shall we give ?

Editor : This has been somewhat considered above, but we will consider it a little more. I think that we have to improve all our languages. What subjects we should learn through them need not be elaborated here. Those English books which are valuable, we should translate into the various Indian languages. We should abandon the pretension of learning many sciences. Religious, that is ethical, education will occupy the first place. Every cultured Indian will know in addition to his own provincial language, if a Hindu, Sanskrit ; if a Mohammedan, Arabic ; if a Parsee, Persian ; and all, Hindi. Some Hindus should know Arabic and Persian ; some Mohammedans and Parsees, Sanskrit. Several Northerners and Westerners

should learn Tamil. A universal language for India should be Hindi, with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. In order that the Hindus and the Moham-medans may have closer relations, it is necessary to know both the characters. And, if we can do this, we can drive the English language out of the field in a short time. All this is necessary for us, slaves. Through our slavery the nation has been enslaved, and it will be free with our freedom.

Reader : The question of religious education is very difficult.

Editor : Yet we cannot do without it. India will never be godless. Rank atheism cannot flourish in this land. The task is indeed difficult. My head begins to turn as I think of religious education. Our religious teachers are hypocritical and selfish ; they will have to be approached. The Mullas, the Dasturs and the Brahmans hold the key in their hands, but if they will not have the good sense, the energy that we have derived from English education will have to be devoted to religious education. This is not very difficult. Only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted and it is those who are within the fringe who alone need cleansing. We who come under this category can even cleanse ourselves because my remarks do not apply to the millions. In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it.

Hind Swaraj, ch. XVIII

EDUCATION THROUGH A VOCATION

In the course of a number of talks Gandhiji explained at length the genesis, in his own mind, of the new education scheme, and the synthesis between vocation and education that he had in view. "I had long been impressed with the necessity for a new departure," said he, "as I knew the failure modern education had been through the

numerous students who came to see me on my return from South Africa. So I started with the introduction of training in handicrafts in the Ashram school. In fact an extra emphasis was placed on manual training, with the result that the children soon got tired of manual training and thought that they had been deprived of literary training. There they were wrong, for even the little that they gained was more than children ordinarily got in the orthodox schools. But that set me thinking, and I came to the conclusion that not vocation *cum* literary training, but literary training through vocational training, was the thing. Then vocational training would cease to be a drudgery and literary training would have a new content and new usefulness.

"English we decided to taboo, because we knew that most of the time of the children was taken up with memorizing English words and phrases, and even then they could not put in their own language what they had learnt, and could not properly follow what the teacher taught them. On the other hand they forgot their own language by sheer neglect. Education through vocational training seemed to be the only way to avoid both these evils.

"I should make a start on the first day with finding out the calibre of the boys — whether they know any reading and writing, any geography — and then start with trying to add to their equipment through the introduction of the *takli*.

"Now you might well ask me why I picked up the *takli* out of many other existing handicrafts. Because *takli* was one of the first crafts that we found out and which has subsisted through the ages. In the earliest ages all our cloth used to be made of *takli* yarn. The spinning wheel came later, and as the finest counts could not be produced on the spinning wheel one had to go back to the *takli*. In devising the *takli* man's inventive genius reached a height that had not been reached before. The cunning of the fingers was put to the best possible use. But as the *takli* was confined to the artisans who were never educated, it fell into disuse. If we want to revive it today in all its

glory, if we are to revive and reconstruct village life, we must begin the education of children with the *takli*. My next lesson would therefore be to teach the boys the place the *takli* used to occupy in our daily life. Next I would take them into a little history and teach them how it declined. Then would follow a brief course in Indian history, starting from the East India Company, or even earlier from the Muslim period, giving them a detailed account of the exploitation that was the stock-in-trade of the East India Company, how by a systematic process our main handicraft was strangled and ultimately killed. Next would follow a brief course in mechanics — construction of the *takli*. It must have originally consisted of a small ball of clay or even wet flour dried on a bamboo splinter running through its centre. This has still survived in some parts of Bihar and Bengal. Then a brick disc took the place of the clay ball and then in our times iron, or steel and brass have taken the place of the brick disc and a steel wire the place of the splinter. Even here one might expatiate with profit on the size of the disc, and the wire, why it is of a particular size and why not more or less. Next would follow a few lectures on cotton, its habitat, its varieties, the countries and the provinces of India where it is at present grown and so on. Again some knowledge about its cultivation, the soil best suited for it, and so on. That would make us launch into a little agriculture.

“You will see that this takes a fund of assimilated knowledge on the part of the teacher before he can impart it to his pupils. The whole of elementary arithmetic can be taught through the counting of yards of spinning, finding out the count of yarn, making up of hanks, getting it ready for the weaver, the number of cross threads in the warp to be put in for particular textures of cloth and so on. Every process from the growing of cotton to the manufacture of the finished product — cotton picking, ginning, carding, spinning, sizing, weaving — all would have their mechanics and history and mathematics correlated to them.

“The principal idea is to impart the whole education of the body and the mind and the soul through the handi-

craft that is taught to the children. You have to draw out all that is in the child through teaching all the processes of the handicraft, and all your lessons in history, geography, arithmetic will be related to the craft."

Harijan, 11-6-'38

3

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OR DISSIPATION

During my recent wandering in Travancore and Madras I found that most of the students and 'intellectuals' who came into touch with me were an instance of intellectual dissipation rather than intellectual development. The fault lies in the modern system of education which encourages this vicious tendency, misdirects the mind, and thereby hinders its development instead of helping it. My experiments in Segaoon have only confirmed this impression. But they are as yet too incomplete to be cited as evidence. The views on education that I am now going to set forth have been held by me right from the time of the founding of the Phoenix settlement in South Africa in the year 1904.

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they

can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.

The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us; only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations. Take the case of our village folk. From their childhood upward they toil and labour in their fields from morning till night like their cattle in the midst of whom they live. Their existence is a weary endless round of mechanical drudgery unrelieved by a spark of intelligence or higher graces of life. Deprived of all scope for developing their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through anyhow. On the other hand what goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture which would be ridiculous beyond words if the result was not so tragic. The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with an ordinary labourer. The slightest physical exertion gives him a headache; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness. And what is more, all this is looked upon as quite 'natural'. As for the faculties of the heart, they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in a wild undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. And it is regarded as something laudable!!

As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the very beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture, etc., for his education and in that connection is given a thorough comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations

that he is to perform and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include a knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education. To say that this kind of education can only be given after we have attained our independence would, I am afraid, be like putting the cart before the horse. The advent of independence would be incredibly hastened if we could educate millions of our people through an intelligent exercise of their respective vocations like this and teach them that they live for the common good of all.

Harijan, 8-5-'37

4

ESSENTIALS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

The convener of the small conference of the teachers in Gujarat National Schools which met at Tithal on the 22nd May had sent to the invitees a questionnaire which speaks for itself :

(1) What is the education best suited to the needs of our villages and most beneficial to them? How to spread such education in every village?

(2) How to combat mass illiteracy and ignorance?

(3) Is literacy indispensable for intellectual growth? Is the system of starting instruction with teaching the alphabet and reading and writing prejudicial to intellectual growth?

- (4) The need of making vocational training the pivot of all instruction.
- (5) The future of the present national schools.
- (6) The possibility of imparting all education through the mother-tongue of the children.
- (7) In what essentials of national education are existing schools lacking ?
- (8) The necessity of making Hindi-Hindustani compulsory in the early years of primary and secondary education.

On Gandhiji being invited to give his views on these points, he made observations of which the following is the gist :

“If we want to impart education best suited to the needs of villagers, we should take the Vidyapith to the villages. We should convert it into a training school in order that we might be able to give practical training to teachers in terms of the needs of villagers. You cannot instruct the teachers in the needs of villagers through a training school in a city. Nor can you so interest them in the condition of villages. To interest city-dwellers in villages and make them live in them is no easy task. I am finding daily confirmation of this in Segaon. I cannot give you the assurance that our year's stay in Segaon has made of us villagers or that we have become one with them for the common good.

“Then as to primary education, my confirmed opinion is that the commencement of training by teaching the alphabet and reading and writing hampers their intellectual growth. I would not teach them the alphabet till they have had an elementary knowledge of history, geography, mental arithmetic and the art (say) of spinning. Through these three I should develop their intelligence. Question may be asked how intelligence can be developed through the *takli* or the spinning wheel. It can to a marvellous degree if it is not taught merely mechanically. When you tell a child the reason for each process, when you explain the mechanism of the *takli* or the wheel, when you give him the history of cotton and its connection with civilization itself and take him to the village field where it is grown, and teach him to count the rounds he spins and the

method of finding the evenness and strength of his yarn, you hold his interest and simultaneously train his hands, his eyes and his mind. I should give six months to this preliminary training. The child is probably now ready for learning how to read the alphabet, and when he is able to do so rapidly, he is ready to learn simple drawing, and when he has learnt to draw geometrical figures and the figures of the birds etc., he will draw, not scrawl, the figures of the alphabet. I can recall the days of my childhood when I was being taught the alphabet. I know what a drag it was. Nobody cared why my intellect was rusting. I consider writing as a fine art. We kill it by imposing the alphabet on little children and making it the beginning of learning. Thus we do violence to the art of writing and stunt the growth of the child when we seek to teach him the alphabet before its time.

"Indeed in my opinion what we have reason to deplore and be ashamed of is not so much illiteracy as ignorance. Therefore for adult education too I should have an intensive programme of driving out ignorance through carefully selected teachers with an equally carefully selected syllabus according to which they would educate the adult villagers' mind. This is not to say that I would not give them a knowledge of the alphabet. I value it too much to despise or even belittle its merit as a vehicle of education. I appreciate Prof. Laubach's immense labours in the way of making the alphabet easy and Prof. Bhagwat's great and practical contribution in the same direction. Indeed I have invited the latter to come to Segaoon whenever he chooses and try his art on the men, women and even children of Segaoon.

"As to the necessity and value of regarding the teaching of village handicrafts as the pivot and centre of education I have no manner of doubt. The method adopted in the institutions in India I do not call education, i.e. drawing out the best in man, but a debauchery of the mind. It informs the mind anyhow, whereas the method of training the mind through village handicrafts from the beginning as the central fact would promote the real, disciplined

development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual. Here too, I must not be understood to belittle fine arts. But I would not misplace them. Matter misplaced has been rightly described as dirt. In proof of what I am saying, I can only cite the tons of worthless and even indecent literature that is pouring in upon us with the result which he who runs may see."

Harijan, 5-6-'37

5

WHAT ABOUT LITERACY?

I have received many opinions on the ideas I have been propounding in these columns on education. I may be able to reproduce the most important of them in these columns. For the moment I wish to answer a grievance a learned correspondent has made of the neglect of literacy of which he imagines I have been guilty. There is nothing in what I have written to warrant such a belief. For have I not contended that the children in the schools of my conception will receive every instruction through the handicrafts they may be taught? That includes literacy. In my scheme of things the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life, the ears will catch the names and meanings of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural, responsive, and therefore the quickest and the cheapest in the land. The children of my school will therefore read much more quickly than they will write. And when they write they will not produce daubs as I do even now (thanks to my teachers) but they will trace correct letters even as they will trace correct figures of the objects they may see. If the schools of my conception ever come into being, I make bold to say that they will vie with the most advanced schools in quickness, so far as reading is concerned, and

even writing if it is common ground that the writing must be correct and not incorrect as now is in the vast majority of cases. The children of the Segaoon school may be said to be writing in accordance with the orthodox standard ; they spoil slate and paper according to my standard.

Harijan, 28-8-37

6

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF NAI TALIM

[Message sent to the *Nai Talim*, a monthly published by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Wardha, at the time of its inauguration. — Ed.]

It is necessary to understand the newness or originality in the Nai Talim. Whatever good there is in the old education will of course, be retained in the Nai Talim ; but there will be enough of the new element besides. If Nai Talim is really new it should lead to the following results : Our sense of frustration should give place to hope ; our penury and starvation to a sufficiency of means to maintain ourselves ; unemployment to industry and work ; discord to concord. It should enable our sons and daughters to learn to read and write and know along with it a craft through which they will acquire knowledge.

Utmangai, 14-10-'38

SECTION TWO: BASIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE

7

QUESTIONS BEFORE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Marwadi High School, Wardha, recently renamed Navabharat Vidyalaya, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. The management conceived the idea of calling on the occasion a small conference of nationally-minded educationists to discuss the plan of education I have been endeavouring to propound in these columns. The Secretary, Shri Shrimannarayan Agarwal, consulted me as to the desirability of convening such a conference, and asked me to preside if I approved of the idea. I liked both the suggestions. So the conference will be held at Wardha on October 22nd and 23rd. Only those will attend who are invited thereto. Provision is being made only for a limited number who are deeply interested in the problem and can make a useful contribution to the discussion. The conference is not intended to be at all spectacular. There will be no visitors. It will be a purely business meeting. A limited number of press tickets will be issued. I advise pressmen to elect one or two representatives and share the reporting.

I approach the task in confidence but in all humility, with an open mind, and with the will to learn and to revise and correct my views, whenever necessary.

The propositions I shall submit to the conference for consideration will be, so far as they occur to me at present, as follows :

1. The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country in any shape or form. English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the

higher branches of learning, has created a permanent bar between the highly-educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. This excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in their own land. Absence of vocational training has made the educated class almost unfit for productive work and harmed them physically. Money spent on primary education is a waste of expenditure inasmuch as what little is taught is soon forgotten and has little or no value in terms of the villages or cities. Such advantage as is gained by the existing system of education is not gained by the chief taxpayer his children getting the least.

2. The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained up to the matriculation standard less English and plus a substantial vocation.

3. For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should so far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words vocations should serve a double purpose — to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.

Land, buildings and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupil's labour.

All the processes of cotton, wool and silk, commencing from gathering, cleaning, ginning (in the case of cotton), carding, spinning, dyeing, sizing, warp-making, double-twisting, designing and weaving, embroidery, tailoring, paper-making, cutting, bookbinding, cabinet-making, toy-making, *gur*-making are undoubted occupations that can easily be learnt and handled without much capital outlay.

This primary education should equip boys and girls to earn their bread by the State guaranteeing employment in the vocations learnt or by buying their manufactures at prices fixed by the State.

4. Higher education should be left to private enterprise and for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-letters or fine arts.

The State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department.

The foregoing scheme does not absolve the State from running such seminaries as may be required for supplying State needs.

It is claimed that if the whole scheme is accepted, it will solve the question of the greatest concern to the State — training of its youth, its future makers.

Harijan, 2-10-'37

8

THE PRIMARY QUESTION

[Gandhiji's opening speech at the Educational Conference, held at Wardha on October 22-23, 1937.]

Gandhiji, after thanking all those who had come in response to the invitations, said whether he was there as Chairman or member, he had invited them in order to listen to their opinion and advice on the propositions* he had formulated, especially of those who were opposed to them. He asked for a free, frank and full discussion, as he regretted his inability to meet the friends outside of the *pandal* for reasons of health.

* These are given in the preceding chapter.

The propositions, he said, referred both to primary education and college education, but they would largely have to address themselves to a consideration of primary education. He had included secondary in primary education because primary education was the only education so called that was available to a very small fraction of the people in our villages, many of which he had seen during his tours since 1915. He was speaking exclusively about the needs of these rural boys and girls, the bulk of whom were illiterate. He had no experience of college education, though he had come in contact with hundreds of college boys, had heart-to-heart chats and correspondence with them, knew their needs, failings, and the disease they suffered from. But they might restrict themselves to a consideration of primary education. For, the moment that primary question was solved the secondary one of college education would also be solved.

Education through Manual Training

He was deliberately of opinion that the present system of primary education was not only wasteful, but harmful. Most of the boys were lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they were born. They picked up evil habits, affected urban ways, and got a smattering of something which may be anything else but not education. The remedy, he thought, lay in educating them by means of vocational or manual training. He had some experience of it having trained his own sons and the children on the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, belonging to all castes and creeds, who were good, bad and indifferent, through some manual training, e.g. carpentry or shoe-making which he had learnt from Kallenbach who had training in a Trappist monastery. His sons and all these children, he was confident, had lost nothing though he could not give them an education that either satisfied himself or them, as the time at his disposal was limited and his preoccupations numerous.

The core of his emphasis was not the occupations but education *through* manual training—all education, of letters, history, geography, mathematics, science, etc.

6.3.2

through manual training. It might be objected that in the Middle Ages nothing else was taught. But the occupational training then was far from serving an educational purpose. In this age those born to certain professions had forgotten them, taken to clerical careers, and were lost to the countryside. As a result, go wherever we might, it was impossible to find an efficient carpenter or a smith in an average village. The handicrafts were nearly lost, and the spinning wheel being neglected, was taken to Lancashire where it was developed, thanks to the English genius of developing crafts to an extent that was to be seen today. This he said irrespective of his views on industrialism.

Takli — A Productive Toy

The remedy lay in imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training and therethrough imparting education. Teaching of *takli* spinning, for instance, presupposed imparting of knowledge of various varieties of cotton, different soils in different provinces of India, the history of the ruin of the handicraft, its political reasons which would include the history of the British rule in India, knowledge of arithmetic, and so on. He was trying the experiment on his little grandson who scarcely felt that he was being taught, for he all the while played and laughed and sang.

He was specially mentioning the *takli* in order that they might put to him questions about it, and as he had much to do with it, and seen its power and its romance; also because the handicraft of making cloth was the only one which could be universally taught, and because the *takli* required no expense. It had more than proved its worth. The constructive programme, to the extent it had been carried out, had led to the formation of the Congress Ministries in seven provinces, and their success also would depend on the extent to which we carried it out.

He had contemplated a seven years' course which so far as the *takli* was concerned would culminate in practical knowledge of weaving (including dyeing, designing, etc.).

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The custom for all the cloth we could produce was there ready.

He was very keen on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils, as he was convinced that there was no other way to carry education to crores of our children. We could not wait until we had the necessary revenue, until the Viceroy reduced the military expenditure, and so on. He asked them to remember that this primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home, etc. The present generation of boys knew no cleanliness, no self-help, and physically were C. 3. He would therefore give compulsory physical training through music, drill, etc.

The Only Way

The speaker had been accused of being opposed to literary training. Far from it. He simply wanted to show the *way* in which it should be given. The self-supporting aspect had also been attacked. Whereas, it was said, we should be expending millions on primary education, we were going to exploit the children. It was also feared that there would be enormous waste. This fear was falsified by experience. As for exploiting or burdening the children, he would ask whether it was burdening the child to save him from a disaster. The *takli* was a good enough toy to play with. It was no less a toy because it was a productive toy. Even today children helped their parents to a certain extent. The Segaoon children knew the details of agriculture better than he, for having worked with their parents on the fields. Whilst the child would be encouraged to spin and help his parents with agricultural jobs, he would also be made to feel that he did not belong only to his parents, but to the village and to the country and that he must make some return to them. That was the only way. He would tell the Ministers that they would make children helpless by doling out education to them. They would make them self-confident and brave by their paying for their own education by their own labour.

This system was to be common to all—Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians. Why did he not lay any stress on religious instruction, he was asked. Because he was teaching them practical religion, the religion of self-help.

Compulsory Enlistment of Service

The State, continued Gandhiji, was bound to find employment, if they needed it, for all the pupils thus trained. As for teachers, Prof. Shah had suggested the method of conscription. He had demonstrated its value by citing instances from Italy and other lands. If Mussolini could impress the youth of Italy for the service of his country, why should not we? Was it fair to label as slavery the compulsory enlistment of service of our youth for a year or longer before they began their career? The youths had contributed a lot to the success of the movement for freedom during the past 17 years, and the speaker would call upon them to freely give a year of their lives to the service of the nation. Legislation, if it was necessary in this respect, would not be compulsion, as it could not be passed without the consent of the majority of our representatives.

Gandhiji would therefore ask them to say whether this imparting of education through manual training appealed to them. For him, to make it self-supporting would be a test of its efficiency. The children ought at the end of seven years to be able to pay for their instruction and be earning units.

College education was largely an urban proposition. He would not say that it was an unmitigated failure, as primary education was, but the results were fairly disappointing. Why should any one of the graduates have to be unemployed?

The *takli* he had proposed as a concrete instance because Vinoba had the largest amount of practical experience in it, and he was there to answer their objections, if any. Kakasaheb would also be able to tell them something, though his experience was more theoretical than practical. He had especially drawn Gandhiji's attention to

Armstrong's *Education for Life*, especially the chapter on "Education of the Hand". The late Madhusudan Das was a lawyer, but he was convinced that without the use of our hands and feet our brains would be atrophied, and even if it worked it would be the home of Satan. Tolstoy had taught the same lesson through many of his tales.

Based on Non-violence

Gandhiji concluded by inviting the attention of the audience to the very fundamentals of his plan of self-supporting primary education: "We have communal quarrels — not that they are peculiar to us. England had also its Wars of Roses, and today British Imperialism is the enemy of the world. If we want to eliminate communal strife, and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence. I suggested it in connection with the nation's resolve to effect complete prohibition, but I may tell you that even if there was to be no loss of revenue, and our exchequer was full, this education would be a *sine qua non* if we did not want to urbanize our boys. We have to make them true representatives of our culture, our civilization, of the true genius of our nation. We cannot do so otherwise than by giving them a course of self-supporting primary education. Europe is no example for us. It plans its programmes in terms of violence because it believes in violence. I would be the last to minimize the achievement of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence. If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through. We are told that England expends millions on education, America also does so, but we forget that all that wealth is obtained through exploitation. They have reduced the art of exploitation to a science, and might well give their boys the costly education they do. We cannot, will not, think in terms of exploitation, and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence."

Harijan, 30-10-'37

THE MACHINE AGE

In the afternoon Gandhiji opened the session with answering some of the criticisms. *Takli* was not the only thing, but that was the only thing which could be universalized. There was paper-making, *gur*-making from palms, and so on. It would be the function of the Ministers to find out what handicraft would suit what school best. He would warn those who were enamoured of the machine that there was every danger of men being turned into machines with the emphasis on the machine. For those who wanted to live under the machine age his scheme would be useless, but he would also tell them that it would be impossible to keep villagers alive by means of machines. Where there were 300 million living machines, it was idle to think of bringing in new dead machinery. Dr. Zakir Husain was not right when he said that the scheme was educationally sound, irrespective of the ideological background. A lady who knew the project method was visiting Gandhiji the other day, and she said that there was a vast difference between the project method and Gandhiji's scheme. But he would not ask them to accept the scheme without conviction. If our own people acted on the square, there would be no slaves but perfect artisans produced from these schools. Any labour taken from the children should certainly be worth two pice an hour.

But he warned them against accepting anything out of their regard for him. He was near death's door and would not dream of thrusting anything down people's throats. The scheme must be accepted after full and mature consideration so that it may not have to be given up in a little while. He agreed with Prof. Shah that a State was not worth anything which could not provide for its unemployed. But providing doles was not the solution of unemployment. He would provide every one of them with work and give them food if not money. God did not create us to eat, drink and be merry but to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow.

Harijan, 30-10-'37

THE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Resolutions

The following resolutions were passed by the Conference on the second and last day of its session :

(1) That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

(2) That the medium of instruction be the mother-tongue.

(3) That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.

(4) That the Conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

Thereafter a Committee was appointed to prepare a planned syllabus on the lines of the resolutions, to submit their report to the Chairman of the Conference within a month.

Harijan, 30-10-'37

END OF THE CONFERENCE

Gandhiji in winding up the proceedings said he was grateful to all for having come and co-operated with him. He would look forward to further co-operation as the Conference was but the first of the many they would have to have. Malaviyaji had sent to him a warning telegram, but he could put him at ease by saying that there was nothing final about the Conference as it was a Conference of seekers, and everyone was invited to offer suggestions and criticisms. He had never the idea of carrying through anything by storm. The idea of national education and

prohibition were as old as non-co-operation. But the thing in its present shape came to him under the changed circumstances of the country.

Harijan, 30-10-'37

12

A STEP FORWARD

A record of the work of the Educational Conference will be found elsewhere. It marks an important stage in the presentation of my plan to the public and the Congress Ministers. It was a happy augury that so many Ministers attended. The objection and criticism centred round the idea of self-support even in the narrow sense I have mentioned. Therefore the Conference has made the very cautious declaration it has. There is no doubt the Conference had to sail on an uncharted sea. There was no complete precedent before it. If the idea is sound, it will work itself out in practice. After all it is for those who have faith in the self-support part to demonstrate it by working schools in accordance with the idea.

There was a remarkable unanimity so far as the question went of imparting full primary education including the secondary course less English through a vocation. The fact that the whole person in the boys and girls has to be developed through a vocation automatically saves the schools from degenerating into factories. For over and above the required degree of proficiency in the vocation in which they are trained, the boys and girls will have to show equal proficiency in the other subjects they will be expected to learn.

Dr. Zakir Husain's Committee's labours will show how the scheme can be worked in practice and what exactly the boys and girls will be expected to know from year to year.

Objection has been raised that the Conference's resolutions were a foregone conclusion. It has no validity. In

the nature of things it was impossible to invite educationists at random to pronounce their views all of a sudden on what to them was undoubtedly a revolutionary plan. The invitations had therefore to be restricted to those who as teachers had had at least something to do with vocational training. I had myself no idea that the co-workers in the cause of national education would receive the new idea with sympathy. The wider circle of educationalists will undoubtedly be invited to consider the scheme when it comes before the public in a concrete and fuller form through the Zakir Husain Committee. I would request those educationists who may have helpful suggestions to make to send them at once to Shri Aryanayakam, the Convener and Secretary of the Committee, at Wardha.

One of the speakers at the Conference emphasized the fact that education of little boys and girls could be more effectively handled by women than men and by mothers rather than maidens. From another standpoint, too, they are in a better position than me to answer Prof. Shah's conscription scheme. Here is undoubtedly an opportunity for patriotic women with leisure to offer their services to a cause which ranks amongst the noblest of all causes. But if they come forward, they will have to go through a sound preliminary training. Needy women in search of a living will serve no useful purpose by thinking of joining the movement as a career. If they approach the scheme, they should do so in a spirit of pure service and make it a life mission. They will fail and be severely disappointed if they approach it in a selfish spirit. If the cultured women of India will make common cause with the villagers and that too through their children, they will produce a silent and grand revolution in the village life of India. Will they respond ?

Harijan, 30-10-'37

SECTION THREE : SELF-SUPPORTING EDUCATION

13

EDUCATION *v.* DRINK REVENUE

How to solve the problem of education is a problem unfortunately mixed up with the disappearance of the drink revenues. No doubt there are ways and means of raising fresh taxation. Professors Shah and Khambhatta have shown that even this poor country is capable of raising fresh taxation. Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70 per cent of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit their parents' wealth, are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation. And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches. That death duties cannot be imposed by Provincial Governments does not affect my argument.

But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfil our obligations to the nation in this respect in the given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have therefore made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting. By education I mean an all-round drawing out of

the best in child and man — body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools.

I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method is being adopted more or less completely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results. This method does not exclude a knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing. The signs of the alphabet may be taught later when the pupil has learnt to distinguish the wheat from the chaff and when he has somewhat developed his or her tastes. This is a revolutionary proposal but it saves immense labour and enables a student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn. This means all-round economy. Of course the pupil learns mathematics whilst he is learning his handicraft.

I attach the greatest importance to primary education which according to my conception should be equal to the present matriculation less English. If all the collegians were all of a sudden to forget their knowledge, the loss sustained by the sudden lapse of the memory of say a few lakhs of collegians would be as nothing compared to the loss that

the nation has sustained and is sustaining through the ocean of darkness that surrounds three hundred millions. The measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions of villagers.

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need. Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remain arts, medicine and agriculture. Several private arts colleges are today self-supporting. The State would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among moneyed men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have a painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

This is not a fanciful picture. If we would but shed our mental laziness, it would appear to be an eminently reasonable and practical solution of the problem of education that faces the Congress Ministers and therefore the Congress. If the declarations recently made on behalf of the British Government mean what they sound to the ear, the Ministers have the organizing and organized ability of the Civil Service at their disposal to execute their policy. The Services have learnt the art of reducing to practice the policies laid down for them even by capricious Governors and Viceroys. Let the Ministers lay down a well-conceived

but determined policy, and let the Services redeem the promise made on their behalf and prove worthy of the salt they eat.

There remains the question of teachers.' I like Prof. K. T. Shah's idea expressed in his article elsewhere * of conscription being applied to men and women of learning. They may be conscripted to give a number of years, say five, to the teaching for which they may be qualified, on a salary not exceeding their maintenance on a scale in keeping with the economic level of the country. The very high salaries that the teachers and professors in the higher branches demand must go. The village teacher has to be replaced by more competent ones.

Harijan, 31-7-'37

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THE EDUCATION PUZZLE

"The cruelest irony of the new Reforms lies in the fact that we are left with nothing but the liquor revenue to fall back upon in order to give our children education," said Gandhiji in one of the numerous talks he has been giving on the subject, ever since the Congress Ministers took up office. "That is the educational puzzle but it should not baffle us. We have to solve it and the solution must not involve the compromise of our ideal of prohibition cost whatever else it may. It must be shameful and humiliating to think that unless we got the drink revenue, our children would be starved of their education. But if it comes to it, we should prefer it as a lesser evil. If only we will refuse to be obsessed by the figures and by the supposed necessity of giving our children the exact kind of education that they get today, the problem should not baffle us." That explains Gandhiji's emphasis on our educationists putting their heads together in order to evolve a system of education which is at once inexpensive and also in consonance with the needs of our vast rural population.

* *Harijan*, 31-7-'37

"Then you would really abolish what is called secondary education and give the whole education up to matriculation in the village schools?" asked a questioner in great surprise. *

"Certainly. What is your secondary education but compelling the poor boys to learn in a foreign language in seven years what they should learn in the course of a couple of years in their own mother-tongue? If you can but make up your minds to free the children from the incubus of learning their subjects in a foreign tongue, and if you teach them to use their hands and feet profitably, the educational puzzle is solved. You can sacrifice without compunction the whole of the drink revenue. But you must resolve to sacrifice this revenue first, and think of the ways and means about education later. Make the beginning by taking the big step."

Harijan, 21-8-'37

15

SELF-SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Dr. A. Lakshmipathi writes :

"I have seen some institutions conducted by missionaries where the schools are worked only in the mornings, the evenings being spent either in agricultural operations or in some handicraft work for which the students are paid some wages according to the quality and quantity of the work done by them. In this way the institution is made more or less self-supporting and the students do not feel like fish out of water when they leave the school, as they have learnt to do some work enabling them to earn at least their livelihood. I have noticed that the atmosphere in which such schools are conducted is quite different from the dull routine of the stereotyped schools of the Education Department. The boys look more healthy and happy in the idea that they have turned out some useful work, and are physically of a better build. These schools are closed for a short period in the agricultural seasons when all their energy is required for field work. Even in cities such of the boys as have an aptitude may be employed in trades and professions, thereby enabling them to find a diversion. One meal may also be provided at school for

those boys who are in need or for all who wish to partake of the same in an interval of half an hour during the morning classes. Poor boys may thus be persuaded to run to the school with pleasure and their parents may also encourage them to go to school regularly.

"If this scheme of half-day school be adopted, the services of some of these teachers may be utilized for promoting adult education in the villages without any extra payment for such services. The building and other apparatus may also be useful in the same way.

"I have seen the Minister for Education, Madras, and presented a letter stating that the deterioration of health of the present generation is mainly due to unsuitable hours of education at schools. I am of opinion that all schools and colleges should work only in the morning, i.e. between 6 and 11 a.m. A study of four hours at school must be quite enough. The afternoon should be spent at home, and the evening should be devoted to games and physical development. Some of the boys may employ themselves in earning their livelihood, and some may help their parents in their business. The students will be more in touch with their parents, which is essential for development of any vocational calling and hereditary aptitudes.

"If we realize that body-building is nation-building, the proposed change, though apparently revolutionary, is according to Indian customs and climate and it would be welcome to most people."

Of Dr. Lakshmipathi's suggestion for restricting school hours to mornings, I do not wish to say much save to commend it to the educational authorities. As to the more or less self-supporting institutions, they could not do anything else if they were to pay their way partly or wholly and make something of their pupils. Yet my suggestion has shocked some educationists because they have known no other method. The very idea of education being self-supporting seems to them to rob education of all value. They see in the suggestion a mercenary motive. I have, however, just been reading a monograph on a Jewish effort in matters educational. In it the writer speaks thus of the vocational training imparted in the Jewish schools :

"So they find the labour of their hands to be worthy in itself. It is made lighter by intellectual activity, it is ennobled by the patriotic ideal which it serves."

Given the right kind of teachers, our children will be taught the dignity of labour and learn to regard it as an integral part and a means of their intellectual growth, and to realize that it is patriotic to pay for their training through their labour. The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive works, but for developing the intellect of the pupils. Surely, if the State takes charge of the children between seven and fourteen, and trains their bodies and minds through productive labour, the public schools must be frauds and teachers idiots, if they cannot become self-supporting.

Supposing that every boy and girl works, not as a machine but as an intelligent unit, taking interest in the corporate work done under expert guidance, the corporate labour should be, say after the first year of the course, worth one anna per hour. Thus for twenty-six working days of four hours per day, each child will have earned Rs 6-8-0 per month. The only question is whether millions of children can be so profitably employed. We should be intellectual bankrupts, if we cannot direct the energy of our children so as to get from them, after a year's training one anna worth of marketable labour per hour. I know that nowhere in India do villagers earn so much as one anna per hour in the villages. That is because we have reconciled ourselves to the intense disparity between the haves and the have-nots, and because the city people have, perhaps unwittingly, joined in the British exploitation of the village.

Harijan, 11-9-'37

MORE TALKS ON SELF-SUPPORTING EDUCATION

In spite of the weak state of his health and the quantities of rest that he needs, Gandhiji has shown his readiness to discuss his theory of self-supporting education with any one who has thought about the subject and wants to contribute his share to making the new experiment a success. The discussions have been, in view of his health, necessarily few and brief, but every now and then something new has emerged, and whenever he has talked, he has had some fresh suggestion to make and fresh light to throw. Thus on one occasion he sounded a warning against the assumption that the idea of self-supporting education sprang from the necessity of achieving total prohibition as soon as possible. "Both are independent necessities," he said. "You have to start with the conviction that total prohibition has to be achieved revenue or no revenue, education or no education. Similarly, you have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages of India our rural education ought to be made self-supporting if it is to be compulsory."

"I have the first conviction deep down in me," said an educationist who carried on the discussion. "Prohibition to me is an end in itself, and I regard it as a great education in itself. I should, therefore, sacrifice education altogether to make prohibition a success. But the other conviction is lacking. I cannot yet believe that education can be made self-supporting."

"There, too, I want you to start with the conviction. The ways and means will come as you begin to work it out. I regret that I woke up to the necessity of this at this very late age. Otherwise I should have made the experiment myself. Even now, God willing, I shall do what I can to show that it can be self-supporting. But my time has been taken up by other things all these years, equally

important perhaps; but it is this stay in Segaoon that brought the conviction home to me. We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training."

"I see that too. But why should it also support the school?"

"That will be the test of its value. The child at the age of 14, that is, after finishing a seven years' course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even now the poor people's children automatically lend a helping hand to their parents—the feeling at the back of their minds being, what shall my parents eat and what shall they give me to eat if I do not also work with them? That is an education in itself. Even so the State takes charge of the child at seven and returns it to the family as an earning unit. You impart education and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment. You have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his writing, his artistic sense, and so on. He will be master of the craft he learns."

"But supposing a boy takes up the art and science of making Khadi. Do you think it must occupy him all the seven years to master the craft?"

"Yes. It must, if he will not learn it mechanically. Why do we give years to the study of history or to the study of languages? Is a craft any the less important than these subjects which have been up to now given an artificial importance?"

"But as you have been mainly thinking of spinning and weaving, evidently you are thinking of making of these schools so many weaving schools. A child may have no aptitude for weaving and may have it for something else."

"Quite so. Then we will teach him some other craft. But you must know that one school will not teach many

crafts. The idea is that we should have one teacher for twenty-five boys, and you may have as many classes or schools of twenty-five boys as you have teachers available, and have each of these schools specializing in a separate craft — carpentry, smithy, tanning or shoe-making. Only you must bear in mind the fact that you develop the child's mind through each of these crafts. And I would emphasize one more thing. You must forget the cities and concentrate on the villages. They are an ocean. The cities are a mere drop in the ocean. That is why you cannot think of subjects like brick-making. If they must be civil and mechanical engineers, they will after the seven years' course go to the special colleges meant for these higher and specialized courses.

"And let me emphasize one more fact. We are apt to think lightly of the village crafts because we have divorced educational from manual training. Manual work has been regarded as something inferior, and owing to the wretched distortion of the *varna* we came to regard spinners and weavers and carpenters and shoe-makers as belonging to the inferior castes, the proletariat. We have had no Cromptons and Hargreaves because of this vicious system of considering the crafts as something inferior, divorced from the skilled. If they had been regarded as callings having an independent status that learning enjoyed, we should have had great inventors from among our craftsmen. Of course the 'Spinning Jenny' led on to the discovery of water-power and other things which made the mill displace the labour of thousands of people. That was, in my view, a monstrosity. We will by concentrating on the villages see that the inventive skill that an intensive learning of the craft will stimulate will subserve the needs of the villages as a whole."

Harijan, 18-9-'37

SELF-SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

"The cardinal feature of our economic condition is the pressure of population on resources. For example India has not got stretches of unexplored land, nor are we suffering from a plethora of colonies and capital. The right of exploiting our resources should, therefore, be strictly confined to those who have been trained to do it well. One hundred persons cultivating a hundred scattered strips of land produce food for fifty; but if the strips are consolidated and cultivated by twenty persons, including a manure expert, a plant-breeding expert, and an irrigation engineer, the same land can support a hundred. Owing to inventions which increase the productivity of the labourer without dislocating his domestic life or menacing his liberty, an undeniable need has arisen to prevent too many from working. Forcing people to retire at fifty is a wasteful solution because the normal man's powers of mind and body are keenest after that age. The right way is to prevent people from entering life before they are properly equipped.

"Indeed, when we take a wider view we discover that the main cause of India's economic decay is that her workers begin life too early. A carpenter apprentices his son so early that the boy reaches his maximum earning capacity at twelve, marries, and sets up independent business soon after, and becomes impervious to the influence of new methods of production and distribution. The immature mind put to industrial apprenticeship gets dwarfed and fossilized; and there is no grasp of the economic significance of work. Anybody can exploit such a worker. He is content to live and multiply on a bare subsistence in the narrow world which bounds his interest. To this are traceable India's parochialism, contentment, fatalism, the caste system, drugs, and drink. When I visited the Ceylon plantations what harrowed me most was the existence of child-labour. Schools there were, but parents have a tendency to employ children; the elder generation always tries to shirk its duty to the younger. The function of the State is to check activities which are profitable to individuals and harmful to the community. Even in a country like Ceylon where the population is inadequate to exploit natural resources, child-labour is indefensible; much more so is it in India where the employment of children may mean the unemployment of adults.

"Let us not delude ourselves into believing that self-supporting workshop schools manufacturing and marketing goods will

impart education. In actual practice it will be nothing but legalized child-labour. If, for example, spinning is chosen by one school, the rotating of the wheel will become an automatic action. I cannot agree with the editor of the *Harijan* that mathematics can be studied by calculating how much yarn would be needed for a piece, and science and geography by observing the growth and improvement of strains of cotton. These things will stimulate the mind if done, only once or twice, but when repeated daily for years, they will benumb the mind and make it run in grooves. Man has survived in the evolution of life not because he acquires special aptitudes, but because he is capable of that general culture which enables him to meet the ever-changing demands of complex reality. The training of the eye, ear and hand are absolutely necessary, and manual labour must be made compulsory in all schools; but we must not forget that what is called the training of the hand is really a training of the brain. If a school aims at education, it must give up all ideas of producing standardized goods for sale. It must give a variety of raw materials and machines for children to experiment with and spoil. Waste is inevitable. A careful study of Sjt. Parikh's figures in the current issue of the *Harijan* * shows that even when a school has specialized in one occupation and has trained grown-up children waste is considerable. A vocational school, like a college of science, is a place for experimenting and wasting resources. A country like India with limited resources must start as few as necessary, and they should be at important centres. It is no loss to the nation if boys from Gorakhpur and Oudh are chosen and sent to Kanpur to study tanning; but innumerable vocational schools will involve waste.

"Another kind of wastage is not generally recognized. If, with a pound of cotton, adult expert labour using improved machinery can clothe four persons, inexpert labour will clothe barely two. This means that in order to clothe India, double the necessary area will have to be under cotton cultivation. In other words, the land required to grow cotton enough to clothe India if inexpert labour is employed, will suffice for growing both cotton and corn to clothe and feed India, if labour is efficient.

"A third aspect of this wastage should also be borne in mind. We are told that school children can make fancy goods. Recently I saw an ex-student of a technical school making toys out of plywood. The wood, the screws and the tools he used came from abroad. Such industries create a market for foreign goods where none existed. It may be contended that we can make our own plywood; but India is not America with surplus land to grow trees for plywood. The diversion of raw resources and capital to the

* Please refer to *Harijan*, 4-9-37, p. 242.

production of unnecessary things must be checked, not encouraged.

"A school or college should be a place where young minds live in a world of values rather than of prices; if, at the impressionable period, manufacture, marketing and money-making be placed as the ideal, growth will be arrested and we shall have an accentuation of the process, as a result of which the world suffers poverty in the midst of plenty today. It is significant that Shri Ramakrishna attached no value to vocational training.

"That we can force the pace and make the boy learn in two years what he now learns in seven is a curious illusion. A boy's mind is not an empty jar waiting to be filled. A child cannot, and should not, try to learn at eight what he can learn only at 16. The foreign language is not the cause of delay nor are we giving as much extra time to it as people imagine. The writing of essays is a training of the mind and the emotions, and such training must be necessarily slow. The Year's Book of Education gives the following distribution of time over the subjects of the curriculum in the schools of England:

	Hours
Assembly, Registration and Religious Instruction ..	2½
English (including Reading, Writing, Grammar and Composition)	10
Arithmetic and Elementary Mathematics	5½
History and Geography	3
Science and Art (including Manual Instruction) ..	3
Physical Training and Organized Games	3½
	<hr/>
	27½
	<hr/>

"Of the time set apart for instruction, English gets half. It is to be further emphasized that every lesson is an English lesson. The more complex a language, and the more complete its mastery, the greater and more articulate the intellect becomes. The methods employed for developing the mind may seem unproductive, wasteful and slow; but it must be remembered that the object of education is to strengthen the mind and to make psychological adjustment in social life possible. Let us not demand that schools produce not only men but also goods.

"To sum up, it is bad economy to adopt a short-sighted policy which will make the schools solvent and the nation bankrupt.

'A PROFESSOR''

This is from a Professor in a well-known University. There is a signed covering letter to it but the article is unsigned. I therefore refrain from giving the writer's name. After all the reader is concerned with the matter, not its author. This article is a striking case of preconceived notions blurring one's vision. The writer has not taken the trouble to understand my plan. He condemns himself when he likens the boys in the schools of my imagination to the boys on the semi-slave plantations of Ceylon. He forgets that the boys on the plantations are not treated as students. Their labour is no part of their training. In the schools I advocate boys have all that boys learn in high schools less English but plus drill, music, drawing, and, of course, a vocation. To call these schools factories amounts to an obstinate refusal to appreciate a series of facts. It is very like a man refusing to read the description of a human being and calling him a monkey because he has seen no other animal but a monkey, and, because the description in some particulars, but only in some, answers that of monkeys. The Professor would have been on safe ground if he had cautioned the public against expecting all that I have claimed for the proposal. The caution would, however, be unnecessary because I have uttered it myself.

I admit that my proposal is novel. But novelty is no crime. I admit that it has not much experience behind it. But what experience my associates and I have encourages me to think that the plan, if worked faithfully, will succeed. The nation can lose nothing by trying the experiment even if it fails. And the gain will be immense if the experiment succeeds even partially. In no other way can Primary Education be made free, compulsory and effective. The present Primary Education is admittedly a snare and a delusion.

Shri Narhari Parikh's figures have been written in order to support the plan to the extent they can. They are not conclusive. They are encouraging. They supply good data to an enthusiast. Seven years are not an integral part

of my plan. It may be that more time will be required to reach the intellectual level aimed at by me. The nation won't lose anything whatsoever by a prolongation of the period of instruction. The integral parts of the scheme are :

(1) Taken as a whole a vocation or vocations are the best medium for the all-round development of a boy or a girl, and therefore all syllabus should be woven round vocational training.

(2) Primary Education thus conceived as a whole is bound to be self-supporting even though for the first or even the second year's course it may not be wholly so. Primary Education here means, as described above.

The Professor questions the possibility of giving arithmetical and other training through vocations. Here he speaks without experience. I can speak from experience. I had no difficulty in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible. The central fact there was vocational training for nearly eight hours. They had one or, at the most, two hours of book learning. The vocations were digging, cooking, scavenging, sandal-making, simple carpentry, and messenger work. The ages of the children ranged from six to sixteen. That experiment has been since much enriched.

Harijan, 18-9-'37

DOING, NOT IDLE THINKING

Dr. G. S. Arundale sends me an advance copy of an article he has written for the *Orient Illustrated Weekly* with the following covering letter :

"You have expressed a wish that education should now begin to be real in this country and not artificial as it has been for so many years. As one who has been active in education in India, for more than thirty years, I send you an article which is appearing in the *Orient Illustrated Weekly*. Maybe, it represents in some degree your own views. I do feel that there should be a national scheme of education which every National Minister will do his best to express in his particular Province. There has been a good deal of independent tinkering. I feel it is urgent that the note of the great principles should be sounded without delay so that there may be a common bond and a common effort in which public and Government alike shall join."

I take from the article the most important and relevant extracts. After dealing with the question of how to proceed, he says :

"I have no space here to suggest the nature of the principles which should underlie national education. But at least so far as both boys and girls are concerned in the school sphere—I hope we shall gradually eliminate the absurd distinctions of 'school' and 'college'—the note throughout must be that of *doing*."

"However much thought may be stimulated, it is valueless save as it mellows into *doing*. The same may be said as regards the emotions and feelings, so dangerously neglected in most modern systems of education. India needs her youth to be workers—workers whose character is such—developed through education—that it naturally becomes translated into work, into practical capacity, into service. India needs young citizens who can do well in whatever department of life to which they may be called by environment and by heredity. Every subject discloses the Law, the Order and the Purpose of Life. Teachers must never forget this as they tend to grow submerged in the hardness of so-called facts. They should remember that in the world of our intelligence there are no facts, but only conventions. It was well said by Sir Arthur Eddington that science has taken the great step forward of moving from certainty to doubt. Our education must, therefore, cause all its 'facts' to rest lightly in the minds of

its pupils, and use them beyond all else for the development of that character which is the only safe foundation both for individuals and for nations.

"And once character stirs, the desire to *do* will intensify, in the directions both of self-support and of self-sacrifice. There will arise the desire to draw as close as possible to the Earth, our Mother, to worship her in the ritual of agriculture, and to become as little as may be of a burden to her by simplicity of need and purity of desire. Indeed I hold that no child of Mother Earth should be unable to draw from her some direct sustenance, and I would have as part of all education some measures of direct contact with her, even in town educational institutions.

"We must tear ourselves radically away from those educational conventions which have made education so largely futile today. We must begin, under the existing favourable auspices of the National Ministries, a system of real education, which is not instruction. We have become imprisoned in the ruts and grooves of out-of-date educational forms and fetishes, and I heartily welcome Gandhiji's adumbration of an education which is self-supporting. I am not quite sure if we shall be able to go quite as far as he suggests. I entirely agree that a young citizen after finishing a seven years' course 'should be discharged as an earning unit'. I myself feel that every one should, partly through education, become conscious of his creative capacity, for he is a God in the becoming and therefore possesses the supreme attribute of God—the power to create, to *do*. If this power be not awakened, of what use is education? Then indeed is it instruction and not education.

"There is as much brain in the hand as there is in the head. For long the intellect in the head has been our God. Intellect has been our tyrant, our dictator. Under the new dispensation it must be one among our many servants, and we must learn to exalt all that makes for simple living, that draws us near to the beautiful simplicities of nature, all that helps me to live with my hands—manual work of all kinds, of the artist, of the artisan, of the agriculturist.

"I know I should have lived a happier and more effective life had I so been educated."

What I have been saying, as a layman, for the lay reader, Dr. Arundale has said as an educationist, for the educationist, and those who have in their charge the moulding of the youth of the country. I am not surprised at the caution with which he approaches the idea of self-supporting education. For me it is the crux. My one regret is that

what I have seen through the glass darkly for the past 40 years I have begun to see now quite clearly under the stress of circumstances.

Having spoken strongly in 1920 against the present system of education, and having now got the opportunity of influencing, however little it may be, Ministers in seven Provinces, who have been fellow workers and fellow sufferers in the glorious struggle for freedom of the country, I have felt an irresistible call to make good the charge that the present mode of education is radically wrong from bottom to top. And what I have been struggling to express in these columns very inadequately has come upon me like a flash, and the truth of it is daily growing upon me. I do, therefore, venture to ask the educationists of the country, who have no axes to grind and who have an open mind, to study the two propositions that I have laid down, without allowing their preconceived and settled notions about the existing mode of education to interfere with the free flow of their reason. I would urge them not to allow my utter ignorance of education, in its technical and orthodox sense, to prejudice them against what I have been saying and writing. Wisdom, it is said, often comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings. It may be a poetic exaggeration, but there is no doubt that sometimes it does come through babes. Experts polish it and give it a scientific shape. I therefore ask for an examination of my propositions purely on merits. Let me restate them here, not as I have previously laid them down in these columns, but in the language that occurs to me as I am dictating these lines :

1. Primary education, extending over a period of 7 years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard, except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of Primary, Middle and High School Education.

2. Such education, taken as a whole, can, and must be self-supporting ; in fact self-support is the acid test of its reality.

Harijan, 2-10-'37

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PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BOMBAY

In discussing the question of Primary Education I have hitherto deliberately confined myself to the villages as it is in the villages that the bulk of India's population resides. To tackle successfully the question of the villages is to solve the problem for the cities also. But a friend interested in the question of Primary Education in the city of Bombay puts the following poser :

"The Congress Ministry is just now preoccupied with the question of financing Primary Education. The cry to make Primary Education self-supporting is in the air. It would, therefore, be worthwhile to examine as to how and to what extent this can be done in the case of a city like Bombay. The annual budget of the Bombay Corporation for education is said to be somewhere between 35 and 36 lakhs of rupees. But this amount would have to be augmented by several lakhs of rupees before the scheme of introducing compulsory Primary Education in Bombay can be realized. At present over twenty lakhs of rupees are annually spent on teachers' salaries while another four lakhs go as rent. This gives an average of Rs 40 to Rs 42 for each student. Can a student earn this amount in the course of his vocational training? And if not, then, how can Primary Education be made self-supporting?"

I have no doubt in my mind that the city of Bombay and its children would only stand to gain by adopting a vocational basis for Primary Education. At present all that these children can show at the end of their Primary Education course is not worth much and certainly not calculated to fit them for citizenship.

I have no hesitation in recommending the adoption of a vocational basis for Primary Education for cities. It would enable the better part, if not the whole, of the 35 lakhs of the present expenditure on Primary Education

in Bombay to be saved. Taking, for the sake of convenience, Rs 40 to be the annual expense of giving Primary Education to a child in Bombay, it would mean that 87,500 children in all are at present receiving education out of the educational grant of the Bombay Corporation. Now, taking the population of Bombay to be ten lakhs, the total number of children of the school-going age ought to be at least one lakh and a half. This means that no less than 62,000 children of school-going age in the city of Bombay are at present going without Primary Education. If we take away 6,000 out of this figure, as the number of children who are possibly receiving their education privately in their homes, it would still leave 56,000 children for whom Primary Education has still got to be provided. At the present scale of expenditure this would require a sum of Rs 22,40,000 which, so far as I can see, is hardly likely to be forthcoming on this side of Doomsday.

I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory Primary Education for India. I also hold that we shall realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties. Let no one consider these economic calculations in connection with education as sordid, or out of place. There is nothing essentially sordid about economic calculations. True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon-worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life. I therefore make bold to suggest that Bombay would be setting a noble example for the whole country to follow if, by teaching its children a useful industry, it can make Primary Education pay its way. Supposing a student works at a vocation for four hours a day, then taking the number of working days in a month to be 25 and the rate of remuneration two pice

per hour, he or she would be earning Rs 3-2-0 per month for the school. The vocational exercise will keep the mind of the student fresh and alert while providing at the same time a means for drawing out his or her intellect. This does not mean that the child would begin to pay 2 pice per hour from the commencement. But he will pay during the whole period of seven years at the rate of 2 pice per hour.

It is a gross superstition to think that this sort of vocational exercise will make education dull, or cramp the child's mind. Some of my happiest recollections are of the bright and joyful faces of children while they were receiving vocational instruction under competent teachers. As against this, I have also known the most fascinating of subjects boring children, when taught in the wrong way by an incompetent instructor. But, it may be asked, wherefrom are we going to get capable instructors of the kind that we require? My reply is that necessity is the mother of invention. Once we realize the necessity for reorientation of our educational policy, the means for giving effect to it will be found without much difficulty. I am sure that, for a fraction of the time and expense incurred on the present educational system, and the staff to man it, we could easily train all the manual instructors that we should require for our work. It ought to be possible for a committee of educational experts of Bombay if they are in earnest to draw up a scheme of Primary Education on the lines suggested by me and to put it into operation without loss of time. Only they must have a living faith in it as I have. Such faith can only grow from within; it cannot be acquired vicariously. Nothing great in this world was ever accomplished without a living faith.

What kinds of vocations are the fittest for being taught to children in urban schools? There is no hard and fast rule about it. But my reply is clear. I want to resuscitate the villages of India. Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufferance. This is unnatural. It is only when the

cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up. And if the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocations through which they are to receive their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages. So far as I can see the various processes of cotton manufacture from ginning and cleaning of cotton to the spinning of yarn, answer this test as nothing else does. Even today cotton is grown in the villages and is ginned and spun and converted into cloth in the cities. But the chain of processes which cotton undergoes in the mills from the beginning to the end constitutes a huge tragedy of waste in men, materials and mechanical power.

My plan to impart Primary Education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding etc. is thus conceived as the spear-head of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way toward eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands. But who will bell the cat? Will the city-folk listen to me at all? Or, will mine remain a mere cry in the wilderness? Replies to these

and similar questions will depend more on lovers of education like my correspondent living in cities than on me.

Harijan, 9-10-'37

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SELF-SUPPORT NOT THE TEST

Speaking about education through a craft Gandhiji said :

“ If such education is given, the direct result will be that it will be self-supporting. But the test of success is not its self-supporting character, but that the whole man has been drawn out through the teaching of the handicraft in a scientific manner. In fact I would reject a teacher who would promise to make it self-supporting under any circumstances. The self-supporting part will be the logical corollary of the fact that the pupil has learnt the use of every one of his faculties. If a boy who works at a handicraft for three hours a day will surely earn his keep, how much more a boy who adds to the work a development of his mind and soul ! ”

Harijan, 11-6-'38

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CONCLUSIONS

This Basic Education has grown out of the atmosphere surrounding us in the country and is in response to it. It is, therefore, designed to cope with that atmosphere. This atmosphere pervades India's seven hundred thousand villages and its millions of inhabitants. Forget them and you forget India. India is not to be found in her cities. It is in her innumerable villages.

The following are the fundamentals of Basic Education :

1. All education to be true must be self-supporting, that is to say, in the end it will pay its expenses excepting the capital which will remain intact.

2. In it the cunning of the hand will be utilized even up to the final stage, that is to say, hands of the pupils will be skilfully working at some industry for some period during the day.

3. All education must be imparted through the medium of the provincial language.

4. In this there is no room for giving sectional religious training. Fundamental universal ethics will have full scope.

5. This education, whether it is confined to children or adults, male or female, will find its way to the homes of the pupils.

6. Since millions of students receiving this education will consider themselves as of the whole of India, they must learn an inter-provincial language. This common inter-provincial speech can only be Hindustani written in Nagari or Urdu script. Therefore, pupils have to master both the scripts.

Harijan, 2-11-'47

SECTION FOUR : TEACHERS

22

AN APPEAL

I know that there are many teachers who more or less believe in the method of primary education I have been advocating. I know, too, that some are carrying on experiments in giving such training through some vocation. There are again those who are inclined in that direction but circumstances beyond their control have taken them away from the teaching profession. Now that Congress Ministries seem to favour the plan I have outlined, it is necessary to have the names of those who would give their services to the experiment. Will such friends send me their names, qualifications, salaries they would want, and their conditions if any ?

Harijan, 25-9-'37

23

TO APPLICANTS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHERSHIPS

It is gratifying that I am daily receiving letters in reply to my appeal for teachers who approve of the plan of Primary Education I have been developing from week to week in these columns and who are prepared to work it. I observe from the correspondence that the writers have not grasped the meaning of my appeal. No one will be wanted who does not thoroughly believe in primary education through a profitable handicraft and who will not or cannot work it for the love of it and for mere maintenance. To all such I suggest that they thoroughly master the art of spinning and of performing all the anterior processes.

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Meanwhile I am registering all the names. The writers will hear from me in due course of the progress that may be made with the execution of the plan. My appeal is an effort to anticipate the requirements of the seven Provincial Governments, should they feel inclined to endorse and experiment with the plan.

Harijan, 9-10-37

24

TO TEACHERS UNDER BASIC EDUCATION
SCHEME

[The following is the summary of Gandhiji's Hindustani address to the candidates:]

Your pledge is staggering. The fact that there were over 5,000 applications is no proof of patriotism. I wish it were. It is proof of terrible unemployment among the educated or the semi-educated. It is also proof of the glamour that surrounds Government employment. I know that people apply for constabships or teacherships in the hope of adding to their legal pay in illegal ways. I hope that no one of you entertains any such hope. I do not know that with all my patriotism I could bind myself to serve as a teacher for Rs 15 per month. You must dismiss from your minds the thought that there may be profits left over in your schools to be divided amongst you. If, therefore, there is any one among you who repents of the contract, you will ask the Minister to relieve you. I promise to plead for you. Having said this, I tender my congratulations to those who hold to their contract. I hope that God will give you strength to abide by your pledge.

You know that the scheme of this education has been drawn up in pursuance of the Congress programme. Now the Congress is pledged to win Swaraj by non-violent and truthful means. Therefore the cultivation of these cardinal virtues is the foundation of the scheme. And if you do not

show these in your daily contact with your pupils and a character in keeping with them, you will fail and so will your school. You know what Hitler is doing in Germany. His creed is violence of which he makes no secret. The other day we were told that the sword was their soul. The boys and girls there are taught the science of violence from the beginning. They are taught to hate the enemy even in their arithmetic, and you will find that the examples have been chosen with a view to inculcate the military spirit. If we endorse their creed, we must recognize the necessity of inculcating the spirit of violence from infancy. The same thing is happening in Italy. We must be honest even as they are honest. I have no doubt that if the scheme is worked with all its implications and becomes popular throughout India, a silent revolution will have taken place and Swaraj will be a certainty.

Harijan, 30-4-'38

25

THE NON-VIOLENT BASIS

At a meeting of the newly created National Education Board, Gandhiji gave the inner meaning and objective of the new education. Even here he was so full of the mood of the depression that possesses him that he said at the end: "When the New Education Scheme was launched I was full of self-confidence in which I now feel I am lacking. My words had power of which they seem to be bereft today. This lack of confidence is due not to things without but to things within. It is not that my senses are paralysed. My intellect gives me good work for my age. Nor is it that I have lost faith in non-violence. That faith is burning brighter than ever. But I have for the moment lost self-confidence. I would therefore ask you not to accept anything from me implicitly. Accept only what carries conviction to you. But I am sure that if we could conduct even two schools on the right lines I should dance with joy."

The right lines he indicated in the earlier part of the discourse. "We have to make of this training school a school for winning freedom and for the solution of all our ills, of which the chief one is our communal troubles. For this purpose we shall have to concentrate on non-violence. Hitler's and Mussolini's schools accept as their fundamental principle violence. Ours is non-violence according to the Congress. All our problems have therefore to be solved non-violently. Our arithmetic, our science, our history will have a non-violent approach, and the problems in these subjects will be coloured by non-violence. When Madame Halide Edib Hanum delivered her address to the Jamia Milia Islamia on Turkey I remarked that whereas generally history is a chronicle of kings and their wars, the future history will be the history of man. That can be or is only non-violent. Then we shall have to concentrate not on city industries but on rural industries, that is to say, if we want to keep all the 700,000 of our villages alive, and not only a fraction of them, we have to revive our village handicrafts. And you may be sure that if we can impart scholastic training through those crafts we can bring about a revolution. Our text-books will have also to be prepared with the same end.

"I want you to give your close consideration to what I am saying and reject what does not appeal to you. If what I say does not appeal to our Mussalman brethren, they may reject it summarily. The non-violence I want is not non-violence limited to the fight with the British but is to be applied to all our internal affairs and problems, — true active non-violence from which will issue live Hindu-Muslim unity and not a unity based on mutual fear like the pact, for instance, between Hitler and Mussolini."

Harijan, 7-5-'38

BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS

Prof. Tao said that he had given up University work in order to take up peasant's education and he was deeply interested in the Basic Education Scheme. "What exactly is the core of the scheme?" he asked.

"The central fact is some village craft through which the whole of the man or the woman in the child can be drawn out."

But there was the difficulty of teachers, said Prof. Tao, and Gandhiji laughed. We had the same difficulty. "Would you have trained teachers to learn a craft or craftsmen to learn the art of teaching?" asked Prof. Tao.

"The average educated man," replied Gandhiji, "can be expected easily to master a craft. Our craftsmen will require much longer time to acquire the necessary general instruction than an educated man, say like you, can require to learn, say, carpentry."

"But," said Prof. Tao, "our educated man is after fat jobs and money. How can he be interested in this?"

"If the scheme is sound and appeals to the educated mind, it must prove attractive in itself and thus wean the educated youth from the lure of gold. It must fail, if it does not evoke sufficient patriotism from the educated youth. There is one advantage with us. Those who have received instruction through the Indian languages cannot enter colleges. It is just possible that they will find the scheme attractive."

Harijan, 27-8-'38

SECTION FIVE : CRITICISMS AND CLARIFICATIONS

27

IN SUPPORT

'I completely agree with, nay, even humbly plead for your suggestion of teaching a child a useful handicraft scientifically and culturally and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. No doubt it is a revolutionary proposal, but I agree with it completely. Its moral, cultural and economic value will be immense to the individual and to the nation. Not only will it promote dignity of labour, but self-reliance and proper creative values of life. Our aim should be to promote a child's intellectual, physical, moral and vocational needs. The last will teach the general principles of all the processes of production and at the same time give the child or youth practical training in the use of the simplest tools of all industries. Our ideal should be a combination of instruction with productive work on the part of the young generation. This means a linking up of manual work with general instruction and aims at giving a broad idea of the chief branches of industry with which manual work can be co-ordinated. Physical labour combined with an intellectual and moral effort should be our educational outlook. There should be no cleavage between brain work and manual work.

"We should include in our system of primary or elementary education :

1. Mother-tongue.
2. Arithmetic.
3. Natural science.
4. Social science.
5. Geography and history.
6. Manual or polytechnical work.
7. Physical culture.
8. Art and music.
9. Hindustani.

"The only question which, however, arises here is at what age a child's education should begin. If it be at 5 or 6, will it be possible to start a useful handicraft at that age ? What about the expenses in teaching it ? It will not be easier and less expensive

than spreading literacy. I would start a handicraft at the age of 8 or 10, because the use of implements requires a grasp and a steadiness in handling and applying them to the object in view. But primary education must at least begin at the age of five or six. A child cannot be made to wait longer. We must have a ten years' curricula to take the child to the matriculation standard in addition to the polytechnical training we intend to give it. I am, however, doubtful about the economic value of the products of these children especially in their early stages. They will not be saleable in a country where free trade and advanced fashions prevail and when the products themselves will not be durable or finished ones. If the State were to purchase them or take them in return for the service or aid rendered, what will it do with them? It would be better for the State to spend money directly on the education of children than to adopt this process. Of course the products of advanced boys, between 12 to 16 may be made marketable and therefore become an important item of income.

"I would rather treat the problem of literacy on a different footing and face boldly the taxation and expenditure necessary for it.

"The idea of a useful handicraft can be well developed in the advanced stages of primary (or secondary) education. It should be attempted to be made at least partly self-supporting and after experience gained, fully self-supporting, if possible, on the basis of the value of its products. Only one danger will have to be guarded against, that cultural education of the body, mind and spirit does not become subordinated completely to the economic motive and economics of the school.

"I also agree with your further suggestion of primary education being made equal to the present matriculation standard less English, but plus Hindustani (I would add). It means you include also secondary education in the system of primary education. Your idea is a complete scheme of school education of, say, ten years. I would add to this that it must be imparted through the mother-tongue and through no other language. This will liberate the mind of the child and create in it a living interest in the problems of knowledge and life and give it a creative turn and outlook.

"I admit here that education was largely self-supporting in mediaeval times, and could be made so in a general way if our social, economic and political organization and outlook were to remain mediaeval, that is, addicted to the old and narrow values of class and caste economy, society and policy. But today in a democratic, national and socialistic conception of life which has pervaded us, it cannot become so. The only organized power of the

community with sanctions and resources behind it is the State. Hence it has to undertake this work. The old power groups—caste, class, guild, college, church—have lost their power, sanction and resources, and do not exist in that larger sense of the old times. People also have no faith in them. All social power has shifted to the political group which is also the economic and social force even in India. Therefore two ideologies, one mediaeval and one modern, one pluralistic and functional and the other unitary and territorial, cannot work together.

“There was no universal education in the past, no democratic unitary State, no national equalitarian outlook.

“The idea of conscription for educational service is not now a novel one but is worth following. Let the Congress and its Provincial Ministers in their official capacity appeal to the intelligentsia of the country and call upon all who have the education of the people at heart to rally to the assistance of the new Governments for the spread of literacy, culture and education. It will establish a mass contact on a new basis, and not merely on an economic and political basis. It will also serve the higher purposes of awakening consolidation and organization of mass power and intelligence.”

When I first wrote on self-supporting primary education through an industry I had invited educationist fellow workers to favour me with their opinions. Professor S. V. Puntambekar was among the first to send me his. He sent me a long reasoned reply. But for want of space I was unable to deal with it earlier. The foregoing is the most relevant portion of his opinion. For the sake of abridgement I have cut out portions dealing with literacy and college education. For at the forthcoming Conference on the 22nd and 23rd instant the main discussion will centre round self-supporting primary education through an industry.

Harijan, 16-10-'37

SOME CRITICISM ANSWERED

A high educational officer who wishes to remain unknown has sent me, through a common friend, an elaborate and considered criticism of my plan of primary education. For want of space I may not reproduce the whole argument, yet it deserves a reply, if only for the pains the writer has bestowed on his paper.

This is how my suggestions have been paraphrased by the writer :

" (i) Primary education should start and end with training in crafts and industries, and that whatever may be necessary by way of general information should come in as auxiliaries in the initial state, and that formal training through the medium of reading and writing in subjects like history, geography and arithmetic come right at the end.

(ii) Primary education should be self-supporting from the first, and that this should and could be achieved by the State taking over the finished articles coming from the schools and selling them to the public.

(iii) Primary education should be fully up to the matriculation standard — less, of course, English.

(iv) Prof. K. T. Shah's idea of conscripting young men and women to teach in the primary schools should be fully examined and, if possible, acted upon."

The writer at once proceeds to say :

"If we analyse the above programme it seems to us that the underlying ideas are in some cases mediaeval, and in some cases based upon assumptions which would not bear examination. Probably No. iii is a very high standard."

It would have been better if, instead of paraphrasing, the writer had quoted my own words. For all the statements in the first paraphrase are wide of the truth. My point is not that the start should be made with crafts and the rest should come in as auxiliaries. On the contrary I have said that the whole of the general education should come through the crafts and simultaneously with their progress. This is wholly different from what the writer imputes to me. I do not know what happened in the Middle Ages. But I do know that the aim in the Middle Ages or

any Age was never to develop the whole man through crafts. The idea is original. That it may prove to be wrong does not affect the originality. And an original idea does not admit of a frontal attack unless it is tried on a sufficiently large scale. To say *a priori* that it is impossible is no argument.

Nor have I said that the formal training through the medium of reading and writing should come right at the end. On the contrary the formal training comes in at the very beginning. Indeed it is an integral part of the general equipment. I have indeed said, and I repeat here, that reading may come a little later, and writing may come last. But the whole process has to be finished within the first year; so that at the end of the first year in the school of my imagination a seven year old child, boy or girl, will have much more than the general information that any boy or girl has in the present primary school during the first year. He will read correctly and draw correct letters instead of making the daubs that the children generally do at present. The child will also know elementary addition and subtraction and the simple multiplication table. He will have learned a productive craft, say, spinning, by choice.

The second paraphrase is just as unhappy as the first. For what I have claimed is that education through handicrafts should be self-supporting during the sum total of seven years I have assigned for it. I have specifically said that during the first two years it may mean a partial loss.

Mediaeval times may have been bad, but I am not prepared to condemn things simply because they are mediaeval. The spinning wheel is undoubtedly mediaeval, but seems to have come to stay. Though the article is the same it has become a symbol of freedom and unity as at one time, after the advent of the East India Company, it had become the symbol of slavery. Modern India has found in it a deeper and truer meaning than our forefathers had dreamt of. Even so, if the handicrafts were once symbols of factory labour, they may now be symbols and vehicles

of education in the fullest and truest sense of the term. If the Ministers have enough imagination and courage, they will give the idea a trial in spite of the criticism, undoubtedly well-meant, of high educational officers and others especially when the criticism is based on imaginary premises.

Though the writer has been good enough to assume the possibility of Prof. K. T. Shah's scheme of conscription being sound, he later on evidently repents of it. For he says :

" The idea of conscripting teachers is to our mind an outrage. We should have in schools, where young children assemble, men and women who have voluntarily dedicated their lives to this profession so far as such a dedication is possible in this world, and who will bring sunshine and zeal. We have made far too many experiments with our young men and women, but this one bids fair in its results to land us in a ruin from which there will be no escape for at least half a century. The whole thing is based on the notion that teaching is one of those arts for which no adequate training is necessary and that every one is a born teacher. How a man of K. T. Shah's eminence comes to hold it is inexplicable. The idea is a freak idea bound to be tragic in results if applied. Again, how can each and every one train children in handicrafts, etc. ? "

Prof. Shah is well able to defend his proposition. But I would like to remind the writer that the existing teachers are not volunteers. They are hirelings (the word is used in its natural sense) working for their bread and butter. Prof. Shah's scheme does contemplate possession of patriotism, spirit of sacrifice, a certain amount of culture, and a training in a handicraft, before they are taken up. His idea is substantial, quite feasible, and deserves the greatest consideration. If we have to wait till we have born teachers, we shall have to wait till the Judgment Day for them. I submit that teachers will have to be trained on a wholesale scale during the shortest term possible. This cannot be done unless the services of the existing educated young men and women are gently impressed. It will not be unless there is a general willing response from that body. They responded, however feebly, during the civil disobedience

campaign. Will they fail to respond to the call for constructive service against maintenance money ?

Then the writer asks :

" (1) Are we not to allow for a great deal of wastage in raw materials when handled by little boys ?

(2) Are the sales to be effected by a central organization ? What about the cost of this ?

(3) Are the people to be compelled to buy at these stores ?

(4) What about the cases of those communities which are at present manufacturing these ? What will be the reaction on these ? "

My answers are :

1. Of course there will be wastage, but there will be even at the end of the first year some gain by each pupil.

2. The State will absorb much of the material for its own requirements.

3. Nobody will be compelled to buy the nation's children's manufactures, but the nation is expected to buy with pardonable pride and patriotic pleasure that its children make for its needs.

4. There is hardly any competition in the products of village handicrafts. And care will be taken to manufacture things which do not come into unfair competition with any indigenous manufactures. Thus Khadi, village paper, palm *gur* and the like have no competitors.

Harijan, 16-10-'37

AN AMERICAN'S REACTIONS

Dr John De Boer who is in charge of an educational institution in South India, was on a visit to Wardha before starting on a long furlough. He has made a careful study of the Basic Educational Scheme and had therefore useful discussions with Shri Aryanayakam and Kakasaheb. He was keen on having a few minutes with Gandhiji too. He said the scheme had appealed to him most strongly, because at the back of it was non-violence. His difficulty was why non-violence figured so little on the syllabus.

"The reason why it has appealed to you is quite all right," said Gandhiji. "But the whole syllabus cannot centre round non-violence. It is enough to remember that it emerges from a non-violent brain. But it does not presuppose the acceptance of non-violence by those who accept it. Thus, for instance all the members of the Committee do not accept non-violence as a creed. Just as a vegetarian need not necessarily be a believer in non-violence — he may be a vegetarian for reasons of health — even so those who accept the scheme need not be all believers in non-violence."

"I know," said Dr De Boer, "some educationists who will have nothing to do with the system because it is based on a non-violent philosophy of life."

"I know it. But for that matter I know some leading men who would not accept Khadi because it is based on my philosophy of life. But how can I help it? Non-violence is certainly in the heart of the scheme, and I can easily demonstrate it, but I know that there will be little enthusiasm for it when I do so. But those who accept the scheme accept the fact that in a land full of millions of hungry people you cannot teach their children by any other method, and if you can set the thing going the result will be a new economic order. That is quite enough for me, as it is enough for me that Congressmen accept non-violence

as a method for obtaining independence, but not as a way of life. If the whole of India accepted non-violence as a creed and a way of life, we should be able to establish a republic immediately."

"I see," said Dr Boer. "There is one thing now which I do not understand. I am a socialist, and whilst as a believer in non-violence the scheme appeals to me most, I feel as a socialist that the scheme would cut India adrift from the world, whereas we have to integrate with the whole world, and socialism does it as nothing else does."

"I have no difficulty," said Gandhiji. "We do not want to cut adrift from the whole world. We will have a free interchange with all nations, but the present forced interchange has to go. We do not want to be exploited, neither do we want to exploit any other nation. Through the scheme we look forward to making all children producers, and so to change the face of the whole nation, for it will permeate the whole of our social being. But that does not mean that we cut adrift from the whole world. There will be nations that will want to interchange with others because they cannot produce certain things. They will certainly depend on other nations for them, but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them."

"But if you simplify your life to an extent that you need nothing from other countries, you will isolate yourselves from them; whereas I want you to be responsible for America also."

"It is by ceasing to exploit and to be exploited that we can be responsible for America. For America will then follow our example and there will be no difficulty in a free interchange between us."

"But you want to simplify life and cut out industrialization."

"If I could produce all my country's wants by means of the labour of 30,000 people instead of 30 million I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed; I know that socialists would

introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing working hours to one or two in a day, but I do not want it."

"They would have leisure."

"Leisure to play hockey?"

"Not only for that but for creative handicrafts for instance."

"Creative handicrafts I am asking them to engage in. But they will produce with their hands by working eight hours a day."

"You do not of course look forward to a state of society when every house will have a radio and every one a car. That was President Hoover's formula. He wanted not one but two radios and two cars."

"If we had so many cars there would be very little room left for walking," said Gandhiji.

"I agree. We have about 40,000 deaths by accidents every year and thrice as many cases of people being maimed."

"At any rate I am not going to live to see the day when all villages in India will have radios."

"Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think in terms of the economy of abundance."

"I know. But what is abundance? Not the capacity to destroy millions of tons of wheat as you do in America?"

"Yes, that's the nemesis of Capitalism. They do not destroy now, but they are being paid for *not* producing wheat. People indulged in the pastime of throwing eggs at one another because the prices of the eggs had gone down."

"That is what we do not want. If by abundance you mean every one having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest and more things than I can ever usefully use. But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India."

"But Pandit Jawaharlal says in his autobiography you worship Daridranarayana and extol poverty for its own sake."

"I know," said Gandhiji, with a laugh.

Harijan, 12-2-'38

30

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A Muslim correspondent writes :

"During the last four months, opinions have been appearing in the Urdu Press regarding the Wardha Scheme. As usual nobody seems to have read the report carefully or to have thought out the subject of Basic Education. The objections centre round three points :

- (a) that religious instruction has been completely ignored ;
- (b) that boys and girls are to be taught together ; and
- (c) that respect for all religions is to be inculcated.

These objections have been culled from the Urdu Press."

Religious instruction in the sense of denominational religion has been deliberately omitted. Unless there is a State religion it is very difficult, if not impossible, to provide religious instruction as it would mean providing for every denomination. Such instruction is best given at home. The State should allow enough time for every child to receive such instruction at home or otherwise. It is also conceivable that the State should provide facilities for private tuition by those denominations which may wish to instruct their children at school provided that such instruction is paid for by such denominations.

As for co-education, the Zakir Husain Committee has not made it compulsory. Where there is a demand for a separate school for girls, the State will have to make provision. The question of co-education has been left open. It will regulate itself according to the time-spirit. So far as I am aware the members of the Committee were not all of one mind. Personally I have an open mind. I think that

there are just as valid reasons for as against co-education. And I would not oppose the experiment wherever it is made.

As to the necessity of teaching equal regard for all religions, I personally hold strong views. Till we reach that happy state, I see no prospect of real unity among all the different communities. I regard it as fatal to the growth of a friendly spirit among the children belonging to the different faiths, if they are taught either that their religion is superior to every other or that it is the only true religion. If that exclusive spirit is to pervade the nation, the necessary corollary would be that there should be separate schools for every denomination, with freedom to each to decry every other, or that the mention of religion must be entirely prohibited. The result of such a policy is too dreadful to contemplate. Fundamental principles of ethics are common to all religions. These should certainly be taught to the children and that should be regarded as adequate religious instruction so far as the schools under the Wardha scheme are concerned.

Harijan, 16-7-'38

31

BASIC EDUCATION SCHEME UNDER FIRE—I

Clearing the Cobwebs

A number of questions were put to Gandhiji by the delegates. The first question expressed a doubt as to whether the Basic Education scheme was likely to stand the test of time, or if it merely was a measure of temporary expediency. Many prominent educationists were of opinion that sooner or later the handicrafts would have to give place to whole-hog industrialization. Would a society educated on the lines of the Basic Education scheme and based on justice, truth and non-violence, be able to survive the severe strain of the process of industrialization?

"This is not a practical question," replied Gandhiji. "It does not affect our immediate programme. The issue before us is not as to what is going to happen generations hence, but whether this Basic Scheme of education answers the real need of the millions that live in our villages. I do not think that India is ever going to be industrialized to the extent that there will be no villages left. The bulk of India will always consist of villages."

"What will happen to the scheme of Basic Education if the Congress policy changes as a result of the recent presidential election?" he was asked next.

Gandhiji replied that it was a misplaced fear. A change in Congress policy was not going to touch the Basic Education scheme. "It will affect, if it at all does, higher politics only." He continued, "You have come here to undergo three weeks' training course, so that you may be able to teach your students along the Basic Education method on your return. You should have faith that the method will answer the purpose intended."

"Although schemes for industrialization of the country might be put forth, the goal that the Congress has set before it today, is not industrialization of the country. Its goal is, according to a resolution passed by the National Congress at Bombay, revival of village industries. You cannot have mass awakening through any elaborate scheme of industrialization that you may put before the Kisans. It would not add a farthing to their income. But the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. will put lakhs into their pockets within the course of a year. Whatever happens to the Working Committee or the Ministries, personally I do not sense any danger to the constructive activities of the Congress. Although started by the Congress, they have been having an autonomous existence for a long time, and have fully proved their worth. Basic education is an offshoot of these. Education Ministers may change but this will remain. Therefore, those interested in basic education should not worry themselves about Congress politics. The new scheme of

education will live or die by its own merits or want of them."

"But these questions do not satisfy me," he remarked. "They are not directly connected with the scheme of basic education. They do not take us any further. I would like you to ask me questions directly pertaining to the scheme, so that I may give you my expert advice."

The Central Idea

Before going to the meeting, a friend had asked him if the central idea behind the scheme was that teachers should not speak a word to the pupils that could not be correlated to the *takli*. Gandhiji answering this question in the general meeting remarked :

"This is a libel on me. It is true I have said that all instruction must be linked with some basic craft. When you are imparting knowledge to a child of 7 or 10 through the medium of an industry, you should, to begin with, exclude all those subjects which cannot be linked with the craft. By doing so from day to day you will discover ways and means of linking with the craft many things which you had excluded in the beginning. You will save your own energy and the pupil's if you follow this process of exclusion to begin with. We have today no books to go by, no precedents to guide us. Therefore we have to go slow. The main thing is that the teacher should retain his freshness of mind. If you come across something that you cannot correlate with the craft, do not fret over it and get disheartened. Leave it, and go ahead with the subjects that you can correlate. May be another teacher will hit upon the right way and show how it can be correlated. And when you have pooled the experience of many, you will have books to guide you, so that the work of those who follow you will become easier.

"How long, you will ask, are we to go on with this process of exclusion. My reply is, for the whole life-time. At the end you will find that you have included many things that you have excluded at first, that practically all that was worth including has been included, and whatever

you have been obliged to exclude till the end was something very superficial that deserved exclusion. This has been my experience of life. I would not have been able to do many things that I have done if I had not excluded an equal number.

"Our education has got to be revolutionized. The brain must be educated through the hand. If I were a poet, I could write poetry on the possibilities of the five fingers. Why should you think that the mind is everything and the hands and feet nothing? Those who do not train their hands, who go through the ordinary rut of education, lack 'music' in their life. All their faculties are not trained. Mere book knowledge does not interest the child so as to hold his attention fully. The brain gets weary of mere words, and the child's mind begins to wander. The hand does the things it ought not to do, the eye sees the things it ought not to see, the ear hears the things it ought not to hear, and they do not do, see, or hear, respectively, what they ought to. They are not taught to make the right choice and so their education often proves their ruin. An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other is a misnomer."

Educating Mind through the Hands

Shrimati Ashadevi asked Gandhiji to explain to them how the mind could be trained through the hands.

"The old idea," replied Gandhiji, "was to add a handicraft to the ordinary curriculum of education followed in the schools. That is to say, the craft was to be taken in hand wholly separately from education. To me that seems a fatal mistake. The teacher must learn the craft and correlate his knowledge to the craft, so that he will impart all that knowledge to his pupils through the medium of the particular craft that he chooses.

"Take the instance of spinning. Unless I know arithmetic I cannot report how many yards of yarn I have produced on the *takli*, or how many standard rounds it will make or what is the count of the yarn that I have spun. I must learn figures to be able to do so, and I also

must learn addition and subtraction and multiplication and division. In dealing with complicated sums I shall have to use symbols and so get my algebra. Even here, I would insist on the use of Hindustani letters instead of Roman.

"Take geometry next. What can be a better demonstration of a circle than the disc of the *takli*? I can teach all about the circle in this way, without even mentioning the name of Euclid.

"Again, you may ask how I can teach my child geography and history through spinning. Some time ago I came across a book called *Cotton—The Story of Mankind*. It thrilled me. It read like a romance. It began with the history of ancient times, how and when cotton was first grown, the stages of its development, the cotton trade between the different countries and so on. As I mention the different countries to the child, I shall naturally tell him something about the history and geography of these countries. Under whose reign the different commercial treaties were signed during the different periods? Why has cotton to be imported by some countries and cloth by others? Why can every country not grow the cotton it requires? That will lead me into economics and elements of agriculture. I shall teach him to know the different varieties of cotton, in what kind of soil they grow, how to grow them, from where to get them, and so on. Thus *takli* spinning leads me into the whole history of the East India Company, what brought them here, how they destroyed our spinning industry, how the economic motive that brought them to India led them later to entertain political aspirations, how it became a causative factor in the downfall of the Moghuls and the Marathas, in the establishment of the English Raj, and then again in the awakening of the masses in our times. There is thus no end to the educative possibilities of this new scheme. And how much quicker the child will learn all that, without putting an unnecessary tax on his mind and memory.

"Let me further elaborate the idea. Just as a biologist, in order to become a good biologist must learn many other sciences besides biology, basic education, if it is treated as a science, takes us into interminable channels of learning. To extend the example of the *takli*, a pupil teacher, who rivets his attention not merely on the mechanical process of spinning, which of course he must master, but on the spirit of the thing, will concentrate on the *takli* and its various aspects. He will ask himself why the *takli* is made out of a brass disc and has a steel spindle. The original *takli* had its disc made anyhow. The still more primitive *takli* consisted of a wooden spindle with a disc of slate or clay. The *takli* has been developed scientifically, and there is a reason for making the disc out of brass and the spindle out of steel. He must find out that reason. Then, the teacher must ask himself why the disc has that particular diameter, no more and no less. When he has solved these questions satisfactorily and has gone into the mathematics of the thing, your pupil becomes a good engineer. The *takli* becomes his *Kamadhenu* — the 'cow of plenty'. There is no limit to the possibilities of knowledge that can be imparted through this medium. It will be limited only by the energy and conviction with which you work. You have been here for three weeks. You will have spent them usefully if it has enabled you to take to this scheme seriously, so that you will say to yourself, 'I shall either do or die.'

"I am elaborating the instance of spinning because I know it. If I were a carpenter, I would teach my child all these things through carpentry, or through cardboard work if I were a worker in cardboard."

"What we need," Gandhiji continued, "is educationists with originality, fired with true zeal, who will think out from day to day what they are going to teach their pupils. The teacher cannot get this knowledge through musty volumes. He has to use his own faculties of observation and thinking and impart his knowledge to the children through his lips, with the help of a craft.

This means a revolution in the method of teaching, a revolution in the teacher's outlook. Up till now you have been guided by inspectors' reports. You wanted to do what the inspector might like so that you might get more money yet for your institutions or higher salaries for yourselves. But the new teacher will not care for all that. He will say, 'I have done my duty by my pupil if I have made him a better man and in doing so I have used all my resources. That is enough for me.' "

Harijan, 18-2-39

32

BASIC EDUCATION SCHEME UNDER FIRE—II

Training Teachers through a Craft

Q : In training pupil teachers, would it not be better if they are first taught a craft separately and then given a sound exposition of the method of teaching through the medium of that craft? As it is, they are advised to imagine themselves to be of the age of 7 and relearn everything through a craft. In this way it will take them years before they can master the new technique and become competent teachers.

A : No, it would not take them years. Let us imagine that the teacher when he comes to me has a working knowledge of mathematics and history and other subjects. I teach him to make cardboard boxes or to spin. While he is at it I show him how he could have derived his knowledge of mathematics, history and geography through the particular craft. He thus learns how to link his knowledge to the craft. It should not take him long to do so. Take another instance. Suppose I go with my boy of 7 to a basic school. We both learn spinning and I get all my previous knowledge linked with spinning. To the boy it is all new. For the 70 years old father it is all repetition but he will have his old knowledge in a new setting. He should not take more than a few weeks for the process. Thus, unless the teacher develops the receptivity and eagerness

of the child of 8, he will end up by becoming a mere mechanical spinner, which would not fit him for the new method.

Q : A boy who has passed his matriculation can go to college if he wishes to. Will a child who has gone through the basic education syllabus too be able to do so ?

A : Between the boy who has passed the matriculation and the boy who has gone through basic education, the latter will give a better account of himself because his faculties have been developed. He would not feel helpless when he goes to college as matriculates often do.

Q : Seven has been put down as the minimum age for admission of children to a basic education school. Is it to be a chronological or mental age ?

A : Seven should be the average minimum age, but there will be some children of a higher and some of a lower age as well. There is physical as well as mental age to be considered. One child at the age of 7 may have attained sufficient physical development to handle a craft. Another one may not be able to do even at 8. One cannot therefore lay down any hard and fast rules. All the factors have to be taken into consideration.

Gandhiji continued : " The questions show that many of you are filled with doubts. This is the wrong way of going about the work. You should have robust faith. If you have the conviction that I have, that basic education is the thing required to give training for life to millions of our children, your work will flourish. If you have not that faith, there is something wrong with those in charge of your training. They should be able to imbue with this faith whatever else they may or may not give you."

Some Pedagogic Conundrums

Q : The basic education scheme is supposed to be for the villagers. Is there no way out for the city dwellers ? Are they to go along the old ruts ?

A : This is a pertinent question and a good one, but I have answered it already in the columns of the *Harijan*.

Sufficient for the day is the good thereof. As it is, we have a big enough morsel to bite. If we can solve the educational problem of seven lakhs of villages, it will be enough for the present. No doubt educationists are thinking of the cities too. But if we take up the question of the cities along with that of the villages, we will fritter away our energies.

Q : Supposing in a village there were three schools with a different craft in each, the scope for learning may be wider in one than in the other. To which school out of these should the child go ?

A : Such overlapping should not occur. For the majority of our villages are too small to have more than one school. But a big village may have more. Here the craft taught in both should be the same. But I should lay down no hard and fast rule. Experience in such matters would be the best guide. The capacity of various crafts to become popular, their ability to draw out the faculties of the student, should be studied. The idea is that whatever craft you choose, it should draw out the faculties of the child fully and equally. It should be a village craft and it should be useful.

Q : Why should a child waste 7 years on learning a craft when his real profession is going to be something else, e.g. why should a banker's son, who is expected to take to banking later on, learn spinning for 7 years ?

A : The question betrays gross ignorance of the new scheme of education. The boy under the scheme of basic education does not go to school merely to learn a craft. He goes there to receive his primary education, to train his mind through the craft. I claim that the boy who has gone through the new course of primary education for seven years, will make a better banker than the one who has gone through the seven years of ordinary schooling. The latter when he goes to a banking school will be ill at ease because all his faculties will not have been trained. Prejudices die hard. I will have done a good day's work, if I have made you realize this one central fact that the new education scheme is not a little of literary education

and a little of craft. It is full education up to the primary stage through the medium of a craft.

Q : Would it not be better to teach more than one craft in every school ? The children might begin to feel bored of doing the same thing from month to month and year to year.

A : If I find a teacher who becomes dull to his students after a month's spinning, I should dismiss him. There will be newness in every lesson such as there can be new music on the same instrument. By changing over from one craft to another a child tends to become like a monkey jumping from branch to branch with abode nowhere. But I have shown already in the course of our discussion that teaching spinning in a scientific spirit involves learning many things besides spinning. The child will be taught to make his own *takli* and his own winder soon. Therefore, to go back to what I began with, if the teacher takes up the craft in a scientific spirit, he will speak to his pupils through many channels, all of which will contribute to the development of all his faculties.

Harijan, 4-3-'39

33

"NOT AN IMPORTATION FROM THE WEST"

[Foreword to the second edition of *Basic National Education*, Report of the Committee appointed by the Basic Education Conference held at Wardha in October, 1937. — Ed.]

The fact that the first one thousand copies of this pamphlet have been sold out shows that what Dr Zakir Husain and his committee have called Basic National Education is exciting fair interest in India and outside. A more correct though much less attractive description would be Rural National Education through village handicrafts. 'Rural' excludes the so-called higher or English education. 'National' at present connotes truth and

non-violence. And 'through village handicrafts' means that the framers of the scheme expect the teachers to educate village children in their villages so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected village handicrafts in an atmosphere free from super-imposed restrictions and interference. Thus considered, the scheme is a revolution in the education of village children. It is in no sense an importation from the West. If the reader bears this fact in mind, he will be better able to follow the scheme in the preparation of which some of the best educationists have given their undivided attention.

Segaon, 28-5-'38

34

C.P. LOCAL BODIES GIVE THE LEAD

A Conference of the representatives of the local bodies in the Central Provinces and Berar was held during the last week. They invited Gandhiji to address them. Gandhiji did so confining himself to a general question put to him by one of the members, viz. How was the Basic Education Scheme calculated to contribute to the economic and political advancement of the country?

"I am glad," said Gandhiji, "that you have asked me this question. I had better answer it by saying that the present system of primary education was devised without any thought of the economic advancement of the country. The State gets no return whatsoever for the money it is spending on primary education. That we get a few administrators like Shuklaji as products of the so-called higher education is no justification for the waste on primary education. It only brings into painful relief the pathetic superstition that we cannot carry on the affairs of India except through men with English degrees or possessing a knowledge of English. Directors of Public Instruction have admitted that the present system of primary education is a colossal waste, that a very small percentage of the pupils

reach the higher classes, that there is nothing like permanency in the literacy imparted, and that even as it is, it touches but a small fraction of the vast rural areas. What a small fraction of the C.P. villages, for instance, have even these primary schools? And the few schools that there are in the villages bring no kind of return to them.

"The question that you have asked me, therefore, really does not arise. But the new scheme is claimed to be based on sound economics, for all education will be through the medium of a craft. It is not education plus training in a craft, but it is all education by means of a craft. Therefore a boy who receives education, say, through weaving, will surely and must be better than a weaver as a mere craftsman. And nobody can say that a weaver is an economic waste. This weaver will know the various tools and the techniques of all the processes, and will produce better results than a weaver craftsman. The economic results of the system as it has been carried out during the past few months had better be studied in the facts and figures collected by Shrimati Ashadevi. They have gone far beyond our expectations. That is what I mean by self-supporting education. When I used the word *self-supporting* I did not mean that all the capital expenditure would be defrayed from it, but that at least the salary of the teacher would be found out of the proceeds of the articles made by the pupils. The economic aspect of the basic system of education is thus self-evident.

"Then there is another aspect, viz. that of the national awakening. I wonder if you have read the Kumarappa Committee's report on rural industries. The traditional figure of the average income per capita is Rs 70, but he has proved that the per capita income in the C.P. villages does not exceed Rs 12 to Rs 14 per year. Spinning and other village industries for basic education have been so selected that they answer village wants. Therefore the boys who receive their education through village crafts must spread their knowledge in their homes. Now you will see that the average income

of the villager can be easily doubled by the village crafts being revived. Most of the bickerings in the district boards will also cease if you will become servants of the people and interest yourselves actively in the new system. As I was coming to the meeting I had a letter from a school where the children had earned out of a four hours' spinning for 30 days Rs 75 odd. If 30 children earned Rs 75 in a month, you can easily work out how much would be the earning of crores of primary school children in India.

"And imagine the result of the self-confidence and resourcefulness fostered among these children as also of the consciousness that they are adding to the income of the land and solving the problem of unequal distribution. This would lead to an automatic political awakening. I would expect the children to know everything about the local affairs, about our corruption and how it can be ended. This kind of political education I would wish every one of our children to have. That would surely add a cubit to their stature.

"I think I have more than proved that the system of basic education is sure to promote the economic and political advancement of the country.

"Having said this I would make an appeal to you. Now that you have come here I would ask you to study this system of education and to tell Shuklaji and Arya-nayakamji whether you are going away with faith in it or not. I am sure that if you give it a fair trial, in three months' time, you will be able to report that you have revived the schools and put new energy and new life into the children. A seed may take years before it grows into a tree, but the limited results of the educational seed you will sow will be seen in the course of a few months. I have placed the simplest things before the people of India — simplest things calculated to bring about revolutionary changes — e.g. Khadi, prohibition, revival of handicrafts, education through crafts. But unless you can get over the intoxication of the existing regime you will not see the simple things.

"Whatever you do, do not deceive yourselves and us. If you do not feel enthused over the system, you will please plainly say so.

"A word about capital expenditure. The capital expenditure that you will incur will be no dead loss like the expenditure on buildings. You will have to expend on tools and stock which will be of productive use for years. The spinning wheels and the looms and the carding bows you will invest in should be useful to numerous batches of students. Industrialization involves heavy capital expenditure and plenty of wear and tear and depreciation. The present scheme involves nothing like it, as indeed nothing like it is required in a well-planned rural economy.

"One last thing. I want you not to be disturbed by the impending changes in our political system. The Ministries may go as they came. They came on the understanding that they would have to go at the shortest possible notice. They knew that they would have to march from the secretariat to the prison if the occasion came, and they would do so with a smile on their lips. But your work and your programme need not depend on the Ministries. If the work that you have planned is based on solid foundations, it will endure, no matter how many Ministries come and go. But it depends on the faith you have in your work. The Congress and its work will endure so long as it remains true to its creed of truth and non-violence. I have criticized the Congress severely and mercilessly exposed its failings, but I also know that it has still got a fair credit balance.

"Above all let me tell you that everything will depend on your faith and your determination. If you have the will, there is sure to be the way. Every difficulty will dissolve, if you make up your minds that this is a scheme that has to be put through. Only the faith has got to be a living faith. Thousands profess to have faith in God, but if they fly in terror at the slightest alarm, their faith is a dead faith, no living faith. A living faith endows one with the requisite knowledge and resources to put one's

plan through. I am glad that every one of you claims to have that faith. If that is really so, your province will have set a noble example to other provinces."

Harijan, 28-10-'39

35

TAKLI v. TOYS

The Khadi Yatra * was over at 5 p.m. on 31st March, but as Gandhiji had agreed to answer questions, if there were any, after the evening prayer, many people stayed on for the night. Here is one of the questions with Gandhiji's answer.

Q : Has *takli* been introduced into the basic education scheme with the economic, i.e. self-support, or the educative end in view ?

A : Anything introduced in basic education can only have one end in view, i.e. the educative. The object of basic education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of a handicraft. But I hold that any scheme which is sound from the educative point of view and is sufficiently managed, is bound to be sound economically. For instance, we can teach our children to make clay toys that are to be destroyed afterwards. That too will develop their intellect. But it will neglect a very important moral principle, viz. that human labour and material should never be used in a wasteful or unproductive way. The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally makes basic education self-sufficient.

Harijan, 6-4-'40

* The Khadi-lovers of the Wardha district held this annual conference (named Khadi Yatra or Khadi pilgrimage) of the year at Sevagram. These conferences were held under the inspiration and guidance of Shri Vinoba.

LITERARY v. CRAFT WORK

Shri Narhari Parikh writes :

"I feel that in many of our Khadi and other schools the emphasis laid on literary training is wholly wrong. Certain hours are assigned to craft work and certain to literary work, but it is believed that knowledge can only be imbibed through book reading. I hold that more intellectual progress is possible for our students through craft work than books. I shall be grateful if you will give your opinion on this issue."

The writer's complaint is justified. Literary training does not always mean expansion of the intellect. Primarily it is a matter of memorizing. A letter is imprinted on the brain in the same way as any other picture. But literary training is more than mere reading. The same thing is true of handicrafts. A knowledge of handicrafts is not limited to the mere craft. It includes a knowledge of its science. Then the expansion of the intellect is much greater and quicker than in the high schools and colleges. Therefore, to run down craft work or give it a secondary place in the school programme is greatly to be deplored. Students thus underrate the value and place of craft knowledge in the expansion of the intellect. Book learning damages the eyes and cramps thought and originality. There is no such danger in learning crafts and their science. This too involves some study of books. But that study is related to crafts and, therefore, requires the exertion of the intellect. This is what I mean by basic training. It must, in time, come into its own, for it is so true. But meanwhile let there be no differentiation made between book learning and craft work. The latter must be looked upon as an integral part of education and must have the same status as any other subject. This obvious truth should be recognized at least in national schools.

Harijan, 5-4-'42

MANUAL LABOUR & INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

“One of the complaints that has been made by one of you,” Gandhiji remarked, “is that too much emphasis is laid here on manual work. I am a firm believer in the educative value of manual work. Our present educational system is meant for strengthening and perpetuating the imperialist power in India. Those of you who have been brought up under it have naturally developed a taste for it and so find labour irksome. No one in Government schools or colleges bothers to teach the students, how to clean the roads or latrines. Here, cleanliness and sanitation form the very alpha and omega of your training. Scavenging is a fine art you should take pains to learn. Persistent questioning and healthy inquisitiveness are the first requisite for acquiring learning of any kind. Inquisitiveness should be tempered by humility and respectful regard for the teacher. It must not degenerate into impudence. The latter is the enemy of the receptivity of mind. There can be no knowledge without humility and the will to learn.

“Useful manual labour, intelligently performed, is the means *par excellence* for developing the intellect. One may develop a sharp intellect otherwise too. But then it will not be a balanced growth but an unbalanced, distorted abortion. It might easily make of one a rogue and a rascal. A balanced intellect presupposes a harmonious growth of body, mind and soul. That is why we give to manual labour the central place in our curriculum of training here. An intellect that is developed through the medium of socially useful labour will be an instrument for service and will not easily be led astray or fall into devious paths. The latter can well be a scourge. If you grasp that essential point, the money spent by your respective

governments in sending you here for training will have been well-spent."

Harijan, 8-9-'46

38

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BASIC SCHOOL PRODUCT

Shri Aryanayakam brought nine boys of the 7th class to meet Gandhiji. These had all practically completed their seven years' course in the Sevagram Basic School. They were village lads from Sevagram and the neighbouring villages. Compared to those whom one sees working in the fields and who have never been to school, they were a heartening result of a first endeavour. They were clean, well-groomed, disciplined and well-mannered. Gandhiji cracked a few jokes with them which they entered into with merry laughter. One of them had the temerity to ask Gandhiji what type of boys of fourteen he expected to be turned out after a seven years' course at a Basic School? Gandhiji seized the opportunity of telling them that if the school had done its duty by them, boys of fourteen should be truthful, pure and healthy. They should be village-minded. Their brains and hands should have been equally developed. There would be no guile in them. Their intelligence would be keen but they would not be worried about earning money. They would be able to turn their hands to any honest task that came their way. They would not want to go into the cities. Having learnt the lessons of co-operation and service in the school, they would infect their surroundings with the same spirit. They would never be beggars or parasites.

Harijan, 8-9-'46

QUESTIONS AT THE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE *

Q : Can basic education be conducted minus the self-support basis ?

A : You can certainly try, but if you ask my advice, I will tell you that in that event, you had better forget basic education altogether. Self-sufficiency is not an *a priori* condition, but to me, it is the acid test. This does not mean that basic education will be self-supporting from the very start. But taking the entire period of seven years, covered by the basic education plan, income and expenditure must balance each other. Otherwise, it would mean that even at the end of their training, the basic education students will not be fitted for life. That is the negation of basic education. Nai Talim without the self-support basis would, therefore, be like a lifeless body.

Q : We had accepted the principle of giving education through a basic craft. But the Mussalmans are somehow opposed to the spinning wheel. Your emphasis on spinning is perhaps all right in cotton tracts. But do you not agree that it is unsuited to areas where cotton is not grown ? May not some other craft be substituted for it, in such places — agriculture for instance ?

A : This is a very old question. Any basic craft to serve as a medium for education must answer the test of universality. As early as 1908, I came to the conclusion that to make India free and to enable her to stand on her own legs, the spinning wheel had to hum in every home. If England can become an exporter of textiles to India and to the whole world, although she does not grow a pod of cotton, I cannot understand why we cannot introduce cotton spinning in our homes, merely because cotton would have to be obtained from a neighbouring province or

* The Ministers' Conference was held in the Council Hall at Poona under the presidentship of Shri B. G. Kher on 29th and 30th July 1946. Gandhiji attended the conference for over an hour.

district. As a matter of fact, there is no part of India where cotton was not at one time grown. Localization of cotton cultivation in 'cotton tracts' is only a recent and anomalous development, forced upon India by cotton manufacturing interests at the expense of the poor taxpayer and cotton spinner of India. Even today tree-cotton grows everywhere in India. Such arguments as yours, speak ill of our capacity for taking initiative, for our enterprise and resourcefulness. It would kill all manufactures if transportation of raw materials from another place were to be regarded as an insuperable handicap.

Moreover, to enable a person to clothe himself through his own effort, when the alternative is to go naked, is in itself an education. An intelligent pursuit of the various processes related to cotton spinning has, besides, a very high instructional value. In fact, it covers the whole education of man as perhaps no other craft does. We may not today be able to dispel the doubts of the Mussalmans, as they are rooted in a delusion and delusion is a very real thing to its victim, while he is under its spell. But if our faith is clear and firm, and we can demonstrate the success of our method, the Mussalmans will themselves come to us and ask to be taught the secret of our success. They do not seem to have realized that the Charkha has done more for the poorest Mussalman masses than even the Muslim League or any other Muslim organization. The bulk of the weavers in Bengal are Muslims. Nor should it be forgotten, that Dacca owed its worldwide fame for its *shabnam*s to the deftness and skill of Muslim women spinners and Muslim weavers.

The same applies to Maharashtra. The best cure for the delusion is to concentrate on the performance of one's own duty. Truth alone will endure, all the rest be swept away before the tide of time. I must, therefore, continue to bear testimony to Truth even if I am forsaken by all. Mine may today be a voice in the wilderness, but it will be heard when all other voices are silenced if it is the voice of Truth.

The Vicious Circle

"To produce efficient teachers for Nai Talim would take time. What should be done to improve education in the schools in the meantime?" asked Avinashilingam Chettiar speaking in English.

Gandhiji chaffing him for it, suggested amid general laughter, that if he could not speak in Hindustani, he might whisper what he had to say into his neighbour's ear, who would render it into Hindustani for him!

"If you realize," he proceeded, "that the present system of education cannot bring India Independence but only serves to deepen her slavery, you will refuse to encourage it, irrespective of whether any other takes its place or not. You will do whatever you can, within the four corners of the principles of Nai Talim and be satisfied with that." If people did not want the Ministers on those terms, it would be better for the Ministers to resign. They could not possibly be party to catering for poison, because they could not provide or because the people did not relish life-giving food.

Q : You say that for Nai Talim we do not need money but men. But to train men we again need institutions and therefore money. How can we get out of this vicious circle?

A : The remedy lies in your own hands. Begin with yourself. There is a good English proverb: "Charity begins at home." But if you yourself will sit in an easy chair like a sahib and expect others of the 'lesser breed' to get ready for the job, you will get nowhere. That is not my way. It has been my practice ever since my childhood, to begin with myself and my immediate environment in howsoever humble a way. Let us in this respect take a leaf out of the book of the British people. A mere handful of them came to and settled in India in the first instance and carved out an empire for themselves which is even more formidable in its cultural than in its political aspect, so much so, that today we are so infatuated with English

that we hug it just as a slave hugs his fetters, even at the cost of the mother-tongue. Think of the faith, single-minded devotion, sacrifice and perseverance which must have been at the back of it. It only shows that where there is a will, there is a way. Let us be up and doing with the firm resolve not to give up, come what may, and all the difficulties will melt away.

The Place of English

Q : What is the place of English in this programme ? Should it be made compulsory or taught only as an optional second language ?

A : I must cling to my mother-tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course. That can only be for the select few — not for the millions. Today when we have not the means to introduce even free compulsory primary education, how can we make provision for teaching English ? Russia has achieved all her scientific progress without English. It is our mental slavery that makes us feel that we cannot do without English. I can never subscribe to that defeatist creed.

Harijan, 25-8-'46

MOTHER-TONGUE v. ENGLISH

An educationist writes :

“If you do not take care, you will find that basic education in urban areas will take a different form from the rural areas. For instance English will be introduced to the injury of the mother-tongue and a kind of superiority complex developed.”

I must confess that my scheme was conceived in terms of the villages, and when I was developing it I did say that some variation will be necessary in applying the scheme to the cities. This had reference to the industries to be used as media of instruction. I never thought that English could ever find place in the primary stage. And the scheme has so far concerned itself only with the primary stage. No doubt the primary stage is made equivalent to the matriculation, less English. To inflict English on children is to stunt their natural growth and perhaps to kill originality in them. Learning of a language is primarily a training in developing memory. Learning of English from the beginning is an unnecessary tax on a child. He can only learn it at the expense of the mother-tongue. I hold it to be as necessary for the urban child as for the rural to have the foundation of his development laid on the solid rock of the mother-tongue. It is only in unfortunate India that such an obvious proposition needs to be proved.

Harijan, 9-9-'39

THE PLACE OF MEDICINE IN NAI TALIM

Being engrossed in her work and being considerate of my time, Ashadevi never takes it unnecessarily. She did, however, come to me for five minutes the day before my departure for Delhi, to ask whether, in my opinion, there was need for teachers in the Talimi Sangh to study medicine and whether she herself should have the same four or five years' course that doctors have.

I at once realized that in spite of utmost trying, it is difficult for one like Ashadevi who has taken her M.A. under the old system of education to break away completely from its influence.

I have no degrees to boast of. And I forgot long ago to attach any value to the little knowledge I acquired in a high school. And I have drunk deep at the fountain of nature cure. So I said to her :

"You say that the first lesson our children have to learn is how to keep fit and how to keep themselves and their surroundings, clean in every respect. I say to you that all the medical knowledge you require comes into this. Our education is conceived for the crores of villagers, it is for their benefit. They live close to nature, but even so they do not know the laws of nature. What little they know they do not carry out. Nai Talim is derived from our knowledge of the piteous condition of the villagers. We cannot, therefore, know much about this Nai Talim from books. What we have hitherto acquired is from the book of nature. In the same way, we have to learn village doctoring from nature too. The essence of nature cure is that we learn the principles of hygiene and sanitation and abide by those laws as well as the laws relating to proper nutrition. Thus does every one become his own doctor. The man who eats to live, who is friends with the five powers, earth, water, ether, sun and air, and who is a servant of God, the Creator of all these, ought not to fall

ill. If he does, he will remain calm relying on God and die in peace, if need be. If there are any medical herbs in the fields of his village he may make use of them. Crores live and die like this without a murmur. They have not so much as heard of a doctor, much less seen one face to face. Let us become really village-minded. Village children and adults come to us. Let us teach them how to live truly. Doctors aver that 99 per cent of the patients suffer from diseases due to insanitation, eating the wrong food and under-nourishment. If we can teach this 99 per cent the art of living, we can afford to forget the 1 per cent. They may find a philanthropic doctor like Dr. Sushila Nayyar to look after them. We need not worry about them. Today pure water, good earth, fresh air, are unknown to us. We do not know the inestimable value of ether and the sun. If we make wise use of these five powers and if we eat the proper and balanced diet, we shall have done the work of ages. For acquiring this knowledge, we need neither degrees nor crores of money. What we need are a living faith in God, a zeal for service, an acquaintance with the five powers of nature and a knowledge of dietetics. All this can be acquired without wasting time in schools and colleges."

Harijan, 1-9-46

42

WITH THE EDUCATIONISTS

At a meeting of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh held on the 22nd and 23rd of April, 1947, at Patna, Gandhiji poured out his soul to the members.

Self-support

At the very outset, while discussing the budget, Gandhiji warned the members against any tendency to lean on the Governments. "They would be prepared to give us as much perhaps as we ask for. But if we begin to depend on them, it will mean the end of Nai Talim."

The budget presented was for three years. They must become entirely self-supporting at the end of that period. They should, therefore, make the budget estimate accordingly. And if at the end of that period they were not able to succeed they would have to declare their bankruptcy before the country. Failure became a stepping stone to success when it was duly appraised.

Know Your Limitations

Dealing next with the demand of Shri Avinashilingam, the Education Minister of Madras, that the Hindustani Talimi Sangh should run a training school in Madras, the expenses of which would be borne by the Madras Government, Gandhiji warned them against undertakings beyond their strength. Otherwise, they would dissipate their own energy and put the Madras Government also in a fix. Today, with the assumption of power, crores of rupees had come into the hands of the Congress Governments. It was up to the Sangh to weigh the pros and cons and to run the institution if they had teachers enough for the work and were sure of success. It was well to know one's limitations.

Three-fold Development

"Our system of education," continued Gandhiji, "leads to the development of the mind, body and soul. The ordinary system cared only for the mind. Nai Talim was not confined to teaching a little spinning and a little sweeping. However indispensable these were, they were valueless unless they promoted the harmonious development referred to." Gandhiji assured the Sangh, "Today I am engaged in other work. But Nai Talim has never been out of my mind."

The Place of Khadi

Next Gandhiji turned to the place of Khadi in Nai Talim. "It was in South Africa in 1908 that Khadi occupied an important place in my mind," Gandhiji said. He would not insist, however, on centring Nai Talim round Khadi if he knew a better all-round village industry. He felt that if all spun for one hour daily, India would be

able to produce all her cloth requirements. If, however, it required six hours a day, he had no room for Khadi. For, people had to do other things also. They had to produce their food. Some intellectual work had also to be done. There was no room for slave-driving in Nai Talim. One hour spent in spinning should be an hour of self-development of the spinner.

Khadi and Post-basic

“When Saiyyaidainsaheb said that at least in the post-basic stage the processes in the mills would have to be taught, I could not accept it. Not only was hand-spinning sound as a medium of education during the post-basic stage, what is more, millions of students could not be exempt from the necessary occupation. Yesterday Devprakash showed me what he had written on the *takli* and the broom. If all that he has written is true, a lot of knowledge is gained in the learning of the two processes. It could not be finished during the basic period. The trouble is that we have not evolved the science of these essential crafts consistently with the good of all. The basis of mill-spinning and weaving are the *takli* and the handloom. The West made mills because it had to exploit us. We do not want to exploit any one. We do not, therefore, need mills, but we must know the science of the *takli* and the loom. If India were to copy Europe in these, it will mean destruction for India and the world.”

Khadi and Mills

On Dr Zakir Husain pointing out the difficulty of the educationists to think in these terms when the boys who came out of the schools looked to the mills for employment, Gandhiji said, “Boys that come out of the school of my conception will not look to the mills for employment. As a matter of fact, mill cloth should not sell side by side with Khadi. Our mills may sell their manufactures outside India. In England you do not get the cloth manufactured in Lancashire. The whole of it is exported. Our mills may not be able to sell in foreign markets too for long.

The Way for Us

"I can, however, realize your difficulty in view of the fact that the whole atmosphere around is surcharged with the idea of mills. Even our Ministers talk only of mills. The way for us is to die in living up to our faith. If we believe in the truth of Khadi we must live it, spread it and convince the Ministers that we are doing the right thing in terms of national good.

"The Congress created the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, but never took any interest in it. Similarly, the Charkha Sangh is a progeny of the Congress, but it never made it its own. Who cares for these institutions today? When Congressmen had only a little money and a little experience they paid some attention to constructive work. Today, however, the entire Government has come into our hands. They have not yet digested the power it has brought. They will take time to do so."

No Longer the Same Power

Gandhiji realized that work of Nai Talim meant propagation of a new social order. The Ministers holding power, perhaps, did not fully share the Sangh's views. Dr Zakir Husain asked Gandhiji to help co-ordinate the activities of the Government and the Sangh or let the Sangh go into the wilderness. Gandhiji confessed that he no longer commanded the same influence as he used to do. "I do not blame the Government for apathy. They have inherited a machinery which they have to work. If I had been a Minister, perhaps, I too would have acted similarly. Still, I am talking things over with Pandit Jawaharlal and others. One task of the educationists is to explain things. Is it not?"

Dr Zakir Husain : "I believe that the fault lay in the fact that the Congress had never explained its educational policy to its Ministers. I met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad before coming here. He had expressed sympathy and said that he would like to meet the Sangh. The Sangh has now decided to see him."

Gandhiji : "The Government should have invited you at the very outset. Mr Sergeant should work under the

guidance of the Sangh. I had suggested to the Government that they should send you an invitation."

Religious Education

Regarding religious education Dr Zakir Husain thought that facilities should be provided for and time apportioned for religious education in our schools so as to enable those, who understood religion, to come and teach. More than that the Government should not undertake, if it wanted to avoid the appearance of undue interference.

Gandhiji said in reply, "You should talk it over with Maulana Saheb. I do not agree that the Government should provide religious education. If there are some people who want to give religious education of the wrong type, you cannot prevent it. If you try to do so, the result can only be bad. Those who want to give religious education may do so on their own, so long as it is not subversive of law and order or morals. The Governments can only teach ethics based on the main principles common to all religions and agreed to by all parties. In fact ours is a secular State."

Question of Certificates

Regarding the question of certificates to be granted to those passing out of the basic stage, Gandhiji said that the standard should have a short and precise name and the certificate should exactly state in clear Hindustani the qualifications of the candidate without the slightest exaggeration. "To give a thing a high-sounding name," added Gandhiji, "when its worth does not correspond to it, reflects no credit on the giver."

Co-education

Shri Avinashilingam, the Education Minister of Madras, felt that the co-education policy of the Talimi Sangh was not suitable to Madras. He had no objection to co-education among children and among grown-ups, when they knew their own minds. But he was not in favour of co-education at the impressionable age of 15 or 16 when most of the girls came to training schools. Gandhiji, however, disagreed. "If you keep co-education

in your schools but not in your training-schools, the children will think there is something wrong somewhere. I should allow my children to run the risk. We shall have to rid ourselves one day of this sex mentality. We should not seek for examples from the West. Even in training-schools, if the teachers are intelligent, pure and filled with the spirit of Nai Talim, there is no danger. Supposing if some accidents do take place, we should not be frightened by them. They would take place anywhere. Although I speak thus boldly, I am not unaware of the attendant risks. You, as a responsible Minister, should think for yourself and act accordingly."

Khadi and Self-support

Shri Jajuji on the question of self-support said that the craft of spinning and weaving was much less paying than some other occupations, for example, carpentry. It was doubtful whether students passing out of the basic stage could be self-supporting even after seven years of training. They could earn six or eight annas a day at the Charkha Sangh rate. Gandhiji said, "We should not think in terms of money. Khadi is the centre of our activities because we all need cloth. We have the question of clothing the seven lakhs of villages. Today, we get our yarn woven by paying high rates to the weavers. It was wrong of me not to insist on everybody learning weaving as I did in the case of spinning. It must, however, be seen that it does not require more time than can be spared for it. If it occupies the whole of the time at our disposal, we shall have to think anew.

Working for the Love of His Work

"The teacher of Nai Talim will be a craftsman educationist, not merely one for the sake of his pay. Pay or salary is a bad word. He is a workman worthy of his hire. His wife and children too will also be workers. Only thus will true co-operation be born. Only thus can Nai Talim spread in every village in India.

Agriculture as a Basic Craft

"Some people ask me why agriculture could not be a basic craft. The answer is that it has not the educational

potentialities of spinning. It cannot, for example, develop deftness as in spinning. The function of Nai Talim is not merely to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man.

"But though I do not begin with agriculture, it is bound to come in ultimately. For, the field of New Education is comprehensive. The pupils and teachers of the school of my conception will together have to make provision for all they need. A teacher of Nai Talim will have to be a first-class craftsman. All the children of the village will be themselves drawn to the school. In this way, education would automatically become free and universal.

"Today, the condition of India is that vegetables grown in a village are not available for the use of the villagers themselves. The villagers of Travancore cannot use the cocoanuts that are grown there. They are collected at one place and sent to the towns. This anomaly will disappear where basic schools come into existence. Again, today we cultivate money crops such as opium, tobacco, cotton etc. Those trained in Nai Talim will cultivate food crops which they themselves need."

Harijan, 9-11-'47

SECTION SIX: BASIC EDUCATION FINDINGS

SPINNING AND CHARACTER

The Secretary of the A. I. S. A. Karnatak Branch sends me the following report of the spinning work done on the settlement schools :

"When Rev. R. N. Usher-Wilson, the manager of the Hubli settlement, and Miss E. W. Briscoe, Lady Superintendent of the certified school in the settlement, read in the papers that the Karnatak Branch of the All-India Spinners' Association had sent instructors to the Bijapur and Gadag settlements to teach carding and spinning to the unemployed inmates of these settlements, they began to think whether they should try the experiment in the Hubli settlement also. It was the enthusiasm and eagerness of Rev. Wilson and Miss Briscoe that prevailed upon the branch to take up the work in the Hubli settlement.

"We took up work in the Remand Home for boys. The Remand Home contains about 33 boys of all ages between 8 and 16. The boys are kept in the Remand Home either by their guardians or the police for being looked after by the superintendent. The usual reason for keeping the boys there is their wayward conduct or tendency to commit petty thefts. The managers of the Remand Home naturally found it difficult to keep the boys on a straight path. Many of them ran away, and had to be pursued, searched out, and brought again to the Remand Home. The boys could not be sent to any of the primary or secondary schools in the city as there was always the fear of their running away. The settlement authorities had not hit upon any suitable work to keep the bodies and minds of the boys engaged.

"The A. I. S. A. deputed an instructor who worked in training the boys for 3½ months. The processes of cleaning and carding the cotton as well as that of spinning are on the Andhra lines. The older boys that are between 14 and 16 were taken up for training. Each boy is spinning about 1,200 to 1,500 yards per day, the count of the yarn being 25 to 30. I am informed by

the manager of the Remand Home that there is much improvement in the conduct and behaviour of the boys since they began to have regular work with some remuneration. Miss Briscoe's letter speaks for itself. I do not wish to add anything. I herewith attach the letter referred to."

The following is the Lady Superintendent Miss Briscoe's interesting letter to me :

"I am asked by the All-India Spinners' Association to let you know about the spinning that we are doing in our certified school.

1. We started the class for spinning on January 15th, 1940.
2. The boys range from 14 to 16 years, and we were surprised to find how much they appear to enjoy doing it.
3. Before, they sat about with no particular employment as we could not afford to start any expensive industries. Now they are happy and busily engaged, and they seem to have no desire to run away.
4. Now they are earning from 2 annas to 2 annas 3 pies per day per head, working about 5 hours a day. They are paying back the amount advanced privately to start this spinning work, a little is given into their hands and the rest put to their credit, so that they will have something on hand when they leave the Home. As this has been so successful with the boys, we have begun this week teaching the senior girls in the Girls' Certified Home. We thought this news would interest you; therefore I am writing this letter and sending a photo of the boys who do the spinning. You will appreciate how happy they look."

There is ample evidence to corroborate the foregoing testimony as to the steady influence of spinning. I hope Miss Briscoe will continue to send me periodical reports on the progress of her experiment.

Harijan, 4-8-'40

OASIS IN A DESERT

In the midst of the desert of adverse but ill-thought criticism of Government officials of basic education it is refreshing to find the following appreciation of the basic schools of Bihar from the pen of Mr E. R. J. R. Cousins, Adviser to H. E. the Governor of Bihar, received by Shri Aryanayakam, Secretary of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh :

"I am sorry that my programme for the inspection of the basic schools was interfered with by heavy rain and had to be curtailed. But I was able to meet the teachers and pupils of 18 out of the 27 schools, 6 at Brindaban-Ramapura and 12 at Chaubetola-Parukia, and I was extremely interested in all that I saw. We shall not of course be able to judge the experiment fully until the completion of all seven grades, but I was impressed with the cleanliness, intelligence and obvious pleasure of the pupils in their work, and I am confident that we are proceeding on the right lines, and that children of 14 who have gone through the entire basic curriculum will not fail in comparison with those who have gone through the ordinary school course up to the same age.

"A particular encouraging feature, and one upon which I place the greatest emphasis, is that the schools have undoubtedly succeeded in capturing the goodwill and interest of the village people, and as long as this can be retained it is impossible for the system to fail of being a success. The public spirit displayed by the proprietors and the villagers of Chaubetola-Parukia in providing such excellent playgrounds for the school, in preparing roads and equipping the scouts troop, which is one of the largest I have ever seen, and above all in insisting that the village boys shall attend the school regularly is most commendable, and I am assured that similar proofs of public interest are exhibited in connection with other schools which I was not able to see. I feel confident that the efforts of the villagers will be well repaid, and that in addition to education in the ordinary sense, the village boys of the future will acquire at the schools such attributes of mental alertness, manual dexterity, health and cleanliness as will make the villages in future more healthy, attractive and enlightened places than they have been in the past."

Harijan, 22-2-42

EDUCATION THROUGH HANDICRAFTS

Shrimati Ashadevi sends the following interesting figures :

"The 27 basic schools in the small compact area in the Bettiah Thana, Dist. Champaran, Bihar, completed three years of work in April 1942. The annual economic chart of Grades I, II and III of these schools for the year 1941-42 makes encouraging study for all workers of basic education. The chart will be published in detail in *Nai Talim*, the monthly organ of basic education. Here we give a brief summary of the principal facts for all who are interested in the progress of basic education. The average attendance for these 27 schools is 70 per cent in Grade I, 76 per cent in Grade II and 79 per cent in Grade III; the average individual earning is Re 0-11-0 in Grade I, Rs 2-4-2 in Grade II, and Rs 6-1-1 in Grade III. The total earning of 390 (number based on average attendance) children of 10,264 total hours of work in all the schools is Rs 267-8-6 in Grade I, of 356 (number based on average attendance) children of 14,082 total hours of work in all the schools is Rs 804-13-8 in Grade II, and of 319 (number based on average attendance) children of 14,362 total hours of work in all the schools is Rs 1,935-14-11 in Grade III, i.e. the total earning of 1,065 children is Rs 3,008-5-1 for the whole year. The average maximum individual earning of these schools is Rs 15-12-0 in Grade III, Rs 6-2-0 in Grade II and Rs 2-10-1 in Grade I. The average maximum speed is 480 rounds per hour on the Charkha and 281 rounds per hour on the *takli* for Grade III; 350 rounds per hour on the Charkha and 242 rounds per hour on the *takli* for Grade II and 164 rounds per hour on the *takli* for Grade I."

These figures are not given to show the output and the income, important as they are in their place. The output and the income have a secondary place in an education chart. But they are given to demonstrate the high educational value of handicrafts as a means of training the youth. It is clear that without industry, care and attention to detail the work could not have been done.

Harijan, 21-6-'42

SECTION SEVEN : POST-BASIC EDUCATION

46

CONGRESS MINISTRIES AND POST-BASIC EDUCATION

The Education Ministers from the Congress Provinces met at the invitation and under the presidentship of Shri Balasaheb Kher in a conference in the Council Hall at Poona on the 29th and 30th July. Education Ministers from all the provinces had been invited. Gandhiji attended the conference for over one hour on the afternoon of the 29th.

In his first meeting with the members of the Talimi Sangh in 1944, after his release from detention, Gandhiji had explained that a stage had been reached, when the scope of basic education should be extended. They would have to take post-basic as well as pre-basic training within their compass. Basic education must become literally education for life. Taking up the thread of the argument from that point, Gandhiji explained to the conference in the course of his address, on what line that extension should take place and what, according to him, the duty of the Ministers was in that respect. He was speaking in answer to the question of Dr Zakir Husain, who was anxious that in their overzeal, they should not take a bigger bite than they could chew. An over-ambitious programme which they had not the means to implement, might prove a trap and danger.

“ If I were a Minister ”

He knew clearly enough, said Gandhiji, what was to be done but he did not quite know how it could be done.

So far they had their course mapped out for them, but now they had to sail on uncharted waters. He knew their difficulties. It was not easy for those who had been brought up in the old tradition, to break away from it at a stroke. If he were in the Ministerial chair, said Gandhiji, he would issue broad instructions that hereafter all educational activity of the Government should be on basic education lines. Adult education drives had been launched in several provinces. If he had his way, he would conduct them also through a basic craft. In his opinion, cotton spinning and the allied processes were crafts *par excellence* for this purpose. But he would leave the choice of the craft to the people concerned in each case in the certain belief that in the end that craft alone which had the necessary intrinsic merit would survive. It should be the job of the inspectors and other officers of the Education Department, to go among the people and teachers of schools and by persuasion and argument, educate them in the value and utility of the Government's new educational policy. That was their primary job, not to lord it over them. If they had no faith in it or if they were unwilling loyally to work out the new policy, he would give them the choice to resign. But he did not think that it would be necessary, if the Ministers knew their job and put their shoulder to the wheel. Merely issuing orders would not do the trick.

Reorientation of University Education

What he had said about adult education applied equally to university education. It must be organically related to the Indian scene. It must therefore be an extension and continuation of the basic education course. That was the central point. If they did not see eye to eye with him on that point, he was afraid they would have little use for his advice. If, on the other hand, they agreed with him that the present university education did not fit them for Independence but only enslaved them, they would be as impatient as he was to completely overhaul and scrap that system and remodel it on new lines consonant with the national requirement.

Today the youth educated in our universities either ran after Government jobs or fell into devious ways and sought outlet for their frustration by fomenting unrest. They were not even ashamed to beg or sponge upon others. Such was their sad plight. The aim of university education should be to turn out true servants of the people, who would live and die for the country's freedom. He was therefore of opinion that university education should be co-ordinated and brought into line with basic education, by taking in teachers from the Talimi Sangh.

The Ministers had accepted office as people's representatives. Their writ would not run beyond the four walls of the Council Hall, unless they could carry the people with them. What was taking place in Bombay and Ahmedabad today, was an ominous symptom, if it portended that the Congress had lost its hold over the people. Nai Talim was as yet a tender sapling but it held out big promise. Its growth could not be forced by Ministerial ukases, if popular support was lacking. If, therefore they could not command popular support, his advice to them would be to tender their resignations. They should not be afraid of anarchy. Theirs was only to do their duty according to their light and leave the rest to God. People would learn the lesson of true Independence even out of that experience.

Harijan, 25-8-46

OF NEW UNIVERSITIES

There seems to be a mania for establishing new universities in the provinces. Gujarat wants one for Gujarati, Maharashtra for Marathi, Carnatic for Kannad, Orissa for Oriya, Assam and what not. I do believe that there should be such universities if these rich provincial languages and the people who speak them are to attain their full height.

At the same time I fear that we betray ourselves into undue haste in accomplishing the object. The first step should be linguistic political redistribution of provinces. Their separate administration will naturally lead to the establishment of universities where there are none. The province of Bombay absorbs three languages: Gujarati, Marathi and Kannad, therefore, stunts their growth. Madras absorbs four: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannad. Thus, there is overlapping also. That Andhradesh has an Andhra University is true. In my opinion it does not occupy the place it would, if Andhra was a separate administrative unit, free from foreign control. India attained that freedom only two months ago. The same thing can be said of the Annamalai University. Who can say that Tamil has come to its own in that University?

There should be a proper background for new universities. They should have feeders in the shape of schools and colleges which will impart instruction through the medium of their respective provincial languages. Then only can there be a proper milieu. University is at the top. A majestic top can only be sustained if there is a sound foundation.

Though we are politically free, we are hardly free from the subtle domination of the West. I have nothing to say to that school of politicians who believe that knowledge can only come from the West. Nor do I subscribe to the belief that nothing good can come out of the West.

I do fear, however, that we are unable as yet to come to a correct decision in the matter. It is to be hoped that no one contends that because we seem to be politically free from foreign domination the mere fact gives us freedom from the more subtle influence of the foreign language and foreign thought. Is it not wisdom, does not duty to the country dictate, that before we embark on new universities we should stop and fill our own lungs first with the ozone of our newly got freedom? A university never needs a pile of majestic buildings and treasures of gold and silver. What it does need most of all is the intelligent backing of public opinion. It should have a large reservoir of teachers to draw upon. Its founders should be far-seeing.

In my opinion it is not for a democratic State to find money for founding universities. If the people want them they will supply the funds. Universities so founded will adorn the country which they represent. Where administration is in foreign hands, whatever comes to the people comes from top and thus they become more and more dependent. Where it is broad-based on popular will, everything goes from bottom upward and hence it lasts. It is good-looking and strengthens the people. In such a democratic scheme money invested in the promotion of learning gives a ten-fold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns a luxuriant crop. Universities founded under foreign domination have run in the reverse direction. Any other result was perhaps impossible. Therefore, there is every reason for being cautious about founding new universities till India has digested the newly acquired freedom.

Then take Hindu-Muslim question. The poison has assumed dangerous proportions, such that it is difficult to forecast where it will land us. Assume that the unthinkable has happened and that not a single Muslim can remain in the Union safely and honourably and that neither Hindu nor Sikh can do likewise in Pakistan. Our education will then wear a poisonous form. If, on the

other hand, Hindus, Muslims and all the others who may belong to different faiths can live in either dominion with perfect safety and honour, then in the nature of things our education will take a shape altogether pleasing. Either people of different faiths having lived together in friendship, have produced a beautiful blend of cultures, which we shall strive to perpetuate and increasingly strengthen the shape, or we shall cast about for the day when there was only one religion represented in Hindustan and retrace our steps to that exclusive culture. It is just possible that we might not be able to find any such historical date and if we do and we retrace our steps, we shall throw our culture back to that ugly period and deservedly earn the execration of the universe. By way of example, if we make the vain attempt to obliterate the Muslim period, we shall have to forget that there was a mighty Juma Masjid in Delhi second to none in the world, or that there was a Muslim University in Aligarh, or that there was the Taj in Agra, one of the seven wonders of the world, or that there were the great forts of Delhi and Agra, built during the Moghul period. We shall then have to rewrite our history with that end in view. Surely, today we have not the atmosphere which will enable us to come to a right conclusion about the conflicting choices. Our two months old freedom is struggling to get itself shaped. We do not know what shape it will ultimately take. Until we know this definitely, it should be enough if we make such changes as are possible in the existing universities and breathe in our existing educational institutions the quickening spirit of freedom. The experience we will thus gain will be helpful when the time is ripe for founding new universities.

Therefore, it is hoped that all educationists will come to the conclusion that judicious delay is necessary for founding new universities.

Harijan, 2-11-'47

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